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A STUDY OF THE APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLIES IN  
GALATIANS 2 AND ACTS 15 WITH AN  
APPLICATION TO THE CONTEMPORARY PLURALISTIC SITUATION

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A Dissertation  
Presented to  
the Faculty of the  
School of Theology at Claremont

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In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree  
Doctor of Religion

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by  
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June 1972

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*under the direction of— his —Faculty Committee,  
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## INTRODUCTION

It is indeed obvious, with even a cursory reading of the New Testament, that there was a vast diversity of ideas, creeds, theologies, and emphases in the early church. The more one investigates the various authors, the more one sees new language and interpretations due to the contexts in which they were writing, the battles they were fighting with "heretical" groups, and the audiences to whom they were writing with their particular needs and concerns. The message of Jesus and the earliest gathering of his followers quickly took on new meanings as it was translated into new patterns of thought.

It has been the task, therefore, of recent New Testament scholarship to try and distinguish between interpretations of Jesus' message and the message itself, and the importance of Jesus' message for the early church. A variety of conclusions have been reached with regards to these problems. There are those who claim that Jesus' message is the essence of faith and that it should be our task to find the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus. There are others who place all their emphasis on the kerygma and say that the only importance Jesus has is his historicity--"that" he existed. And, somewhere in the middle of these two extreme positions there are still others who would claim validity in both the historical Jesus and the kerygma.

Joachim Jeremias is the one who exemplifies the first category to the greatest degree. It has been his life-long task to discover the culture into which Jesus was born, the language in which he spoke,

and Jesus' *ipsissima verba*.<sup>1</sup> It is Jeremias' contention that if someone knows precisely the message of Jesus, he then will know the true faith. While this emphasis on discovering the words of Jesus has been profitable for New Testament scholarship, nevertheless there are two great problems which arise with regards to Jeremias' work. First of all if it is true that faith is dependent on the discovery of the true words of Jesus, faith becomes dependent upon one's abilities as an historian.<sup>2</sup> Faith then will be incomplete if historical research is incomplete (which it always is if it is good historical research continually discovering new concepts). It is obvious that with the many problems in historical research and the many unknowns still extant in methodological study (not counting the fact that New Testament scholarship has changed its mind so many times over the last two hundred years), it is indeed perilous to make history one's basis for belief.

A second problem<sup>3</sup> has to do with the kerygma and the teachings of Jesus. If the teachings of Jesus are the primary source for faith, what relevance does the kerygma then have? Is it even necessary to conduct a study of the kerygma, or should the "canon within the canon" consist only of the *ipsissima verba* of Jesus? One could even crassly

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<sup>1</sup>This can be seen most clearly in the first volume of Joachim Jeremias, *New Testament Theology* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971), where he concerns himself only with Jesus and not at all with the kerygmatic interpretation of Jesus.

<sup>2</sup>See Ernst Käsemann's insights, "Blind Alleys in the 'Jesus of History' Controversy," in his *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 28f.

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 27f.

say that the post-Jesus material ought to be eliminated if the words of Jesus are all that really matter. It is, of course, clear that we would greatly limit our study if we were to go to this extreme.

Radically opposing this view are those who claim that the historical Jesus is not important for the Christian faith. He is important only in the fact "that" he existed, which prevents Christianity from being based exclusively on an idea.<sup>4</sup> Bultmann of course is the chief proponent of this attitude towards Jesus. While this eliminates dependence on historical research for faith in that one's faith comes through existential encounter as seen in the kerygma, nevertheless problems also arise if this position is adopted. One has to wonder why the gospels were written if Jesus was only the presupposition of the New Testament writings. Why did the early gospel writers use the new genre of "gospel" to describe Jesus' teachings and deeds? It must have been because the historical Jesus was in some way important to the early church. This importance is not emphasized enough in Bultmann.

Somewhere in the middle are those who claim importance for the historical Jesus *and* the kerygma.<sup>5</sup> While it is beyond the scope of

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<sup>4</sup>This is what Ogden has done with the historical Jesus. Jesus is only a re-presentation of the timeless idea that has always existed. Cf. Schubert Ogden, *The Reality of God* (New York: Harper & Row, 1966), 203.

<sup>5</sup>Cf. James M. Robinson, *A New Quest of the Historical Jesus* (London: SCM Press, 1963); Herbert Braun, "The Meaning of New Testament Christology," *Journal for Theology and the Church*, V (1968), 89-127; Kasemann, *op. cit.*; *et. al.*

our concern to lay out the different modern views of the relationship between Jesus and the kerygma, nevertheless it is important that we realize there *is* a relationship. For it is the interpretation of this relationship that caused certain conflicts to arise in the New Testament and brought the orthodoxy-heresy question to the fore.

One of these conflicts over the question of heresy and orthodoxy has to do with the problem of the law and its acceptance or non-acceptance by the Gentiles. The law of course was a vital and necessary part of the Jewish faith, and it is evident from Jesus' heavy emphasis on the law and its correct interpretation and from the early church's continued practice of the law that the law was not dropped from the early Christian message. However when the Christian gospel went into new areas, namely Hellenistic Judaism and Gentile, a debate arose regarding the observance of the law by these peoples. They interpreted the law to be a superfluous addition to the Christian message and did not consider themselves bound to keep it as a part of their religious commitment.

This problem concerning the law can be seen most clearly from one of the attempts to solve the problem, the Apostolic Assembly. There are two "descriptions" of the events which took place at the Assembly, one in Galatians 2:1-10 and one in Acts 15:1-29. (We must be aware in studying these two versions of the Apostolic Assembly that they are not actual descriptions of the events of the Assembly. Rather they are interpretations and evaluations of what took place.) In Gal. 2:1-10 Paul describes the Assembly as taking place during his

second journey to Jerusalem. He says that he went up by revelation to present his gospel to those reputed to be leaders to insure that his missionary work would not be in vain (2:2). At the Assembly some men challenged his gospel and demanded that one member of his delegation, a Gentile, be circumcised (2:3). Paul states that he held out against them (2:4-5), and the leaders of the Jerusalem church concurred with him in that they added nothing to his gospel (2:6). On the contrary the Jerusalem church approved of what Paul was doing and agreed that they would go to the Jews while Paul would go to the Gentiles (2:7-9). Paul also agreed that he would gladly raise some money for the church in Jerusalem (2:10).

Luke's version in Acts 15:1-29 is different in many respects. Paul is sent by the Antioch mission to Jerusalem to settle the matter of circumcision. Apparently there had been a great deal of confusion in Antioch after some men came from Judea and preached that the keeping of the law of Moses was necessary for salvation (15:2). Paul journeyed to Jerusalem where some believers again challenged the practice of not circumcising Gentiles (15:5). Peter responded to this by referring to his experience with Cornelius (Acts 10) where God declared the Gentiles to be "clean" even without circumcision. This meant then that the Gentiles did not need to be forced to obey the law, a law that was such a heavy burden to the Jews anyway (15:10). Following a summary of the things God was doing amongst the Gentiles through Paul and Barnabas (15:12), James affirmed the words of Peter drawing upon an Old Testament passage as proof (15:13-17) and judged that the Gentiles need not



observe the entire law. They needed only to abstain from: pollution by contact with idols, unchastity, what is strangled, and blood (15:20). Paul and Barnabas and a delegation from Jerusalem were then sent to the Gentile missions to bring the news of the Assembly and the "Apostolic Decree," which contained the four laws listed above and was meant to settle the differences between the Jews and the Gentiles.

While the Assemblies will be discussed in further detail below (cf. chapters two and three), there are already some observations that can be made with regards to the orthodoxy-heresy question. There are in each of the two versions three groups which come together to discuss the issue of the law for the Gentiles: one that favors the gospel with the law, one that favors the gospel without the law, and one that stands between these two groups as arbiters. In Paul's view two of these groups are "orthodox" and one is "heretical." Paul of course maintains that the gospel is complete without the law. His whole letter to the Galatians is meant to convince the Galatians of the step backward they will be taking if they adopt the law (as Paul's opponents are compelling them to do). For Paul Christ is the only means to salvation while an introduction of the law would mean that the law is also necessary for salvation. He therefore calls those who would require circumcision for the Gentiles (in the case of the Apostolic Assembly, Titus): "false brothers."

Orthodoxy then for Paul is salvation only through a belief in Christ. Anything else is heresy. The third group in the Assembly, those of repute, remain orthodox as long as they do not make the law

a mandatory element of salvation. If they were to say that the uncircumcised are not eligible for salvation, then Paul would also regard them as "false brothers." (See Gal. 2:11ff. where Paul opposes Peter for that very reason.) For Paul this issue is vital, because it has to do with the basis of the Christian faith. What is at stake is the matter of how one gains salvation. Does salvation come through man's own works, i.e. by doing the law, or does it come by God's act in the Christ event? In Paul's view if one advocates the former, he has lost everything (5:4); if he advocates the latter, he has gained salvation.

Luke sees the orthodoxy-heresy question differently than Paul. In his version of the Apostolic Assembly he also has three groups involved, but he does not denigrate any of these groups as Paul does. He says (15:5) that some believers from the party of the Pharisees rose up to challenge the preaching of the gospel without the law to the Gentiles. While this group is later silenced (15:12), nevertheless what is important is the evaluation Luke places on this group. They are not really a "heretical" group even though they encourage a gospel with the law for the Gentiles. Rather they are later proved to be uninformed of God's will by Peter's recounting of his experience with Cornelius.

Because of the calmness with which Luke handles this whole situation and because of the way he regards the believers of the party of the Pharisees, it is apparent that Luke does not have a correct understanding of the law as it was interpreted by the Jews nor does he have a correct understanding of the intense problems which the law

caused. Therefore what is at stake for Luke in the assembly is not the heart of the gospel as it is for Paul, rather it is Luke's concern to explain how the early church settled the circumcision problem while maintaining the continuity between Israel and the Gentiles. He proposes a compromise to settle the problem and to maintain the continuity, the compromise being one which allows the Gentiles to be free from circumcision but asking them to keep the very minimum of laws necessary to promote table fellowship between the Jews and Gentiles.

It is plain therefore that Paul and Luke see the orthodoxy-heresy question in different ways. It is also clear that their evaluations and use of the Assembly are different. Today of course we are still faced with similar problems. How are we to decide what is orthodoxy and what is heresy? How are we to respond to the theologies and groups we regard as "heretical"? How are we to achieve a better unity with those whom we consider "orthodox"? It is my hope that by a detailed study of the Apostolic Assembly, we may be able to gain new perspectives on these questions and be able to apply those perspectives to our present situation. The purpose of this dissertation then is to analyze in depth the ways in which Paul and Luke observe, evaluate, and use the Apostolic Assembly. Through this analysis the problems we have with unification and orthodoxy and heresy may become clearer and may lead us to some helpful answers.

## CHAPTER I

### PAUL'S AND LUKE'S CONCEPTS OF HISTORY AS PRESENTED IN PAUL'S GALATIANS AND LUKE'S ACTS, AND THE EVENTS LEADING UP TO THEIR APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLIES

In the past quarter of a century there have been many attempts, notably by Oscar Cullmann and the Pannenberg school, to reestablish salvation history as the dominant emphasis in the Old and New Testaments. By tracing the writing of salvation history through the early Old Testament writings into the later apocalyptic writings, they have seen salvation history as the criterion for all New Testament writings. These scholars interpret the Bible as saying that God has a plan for history, and that plan is that God is directing the world toward an apocalyptic end, a termination point. One can see God directing history and its movement by examining past events, especially the Christ event, where God has moved in mighty ways to bring about salvation for his people.

While this approach must be debated as the only way of looking at history in the Bible, nevertheless there is in Luke's Acts a definite plan of salvation history. The progression from beginning to end is spelled out at the very beginning of the book when Jesus tells his disciples: be "witnesses in Jerusalem and in all of Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth" (1:8). Acts then moves from beginning to end, i.e. from Jerusalem to the end of the earth with God at the helm

initiating, controlling, and guiding the history of the early Christian church. Luke is thus the writer of salvation history *par excellence*.

But he is more than a writer of salvation history, for he has written the first history of the Christian church. He is the first one to put Christianity into a context--into human history, world history, culture, and the history of religions. He has clearly recognized that Christianity is not an isolated phenomenon made up of a wandering group of ascetics waiting for the world to come to an end. It must come to grips with its historicity.

This way of looking at the world is different from the way Jesus or Paul conceived the world. Jesus predicted the imminent end of history, the end of the world. He saw God acting in the near future in such a way that the world would soon be transformed, and a new existence would come into being. Paul, on the other hand, believed that this end of history had already taken place in the death and resurrection of Christ. Luke, of course, wrote some time later when the world had not ended and the message of the early church concerning the end was now outdated. In Luke's view the church can no longer look to the immediate future for the end of the world nor can it understand itself as living in the eschatological days. It must now take a look at where it has been and where it is going. Luke therefore understands himself as one who is helping to prepare the church for a long future. He explains why there is a Christian church, how it began, and the techniques it used to convert the unbelievers. While writing his history, he is also writing paraenetically to aid his readers in their

attempts to propagate the gospel. Luke wants the church to recognize that the world is here to stay, and the church, with the help of the Holy Spirit, will have to reckon with that world.

If one says that Luke is the first Christian historian, he must be prepared to clarify what kind of an historian he is. For it is obvious that the historiography of the first century Greeks is greatly different than that of the twentieth century Western world. From Luke's writings, as well as from other writings contemporary to him, one can see that his concept of history is drastically different from modern man's view of history. The task of an historian today is to picture as exact a reconstruction of the events as possible so that one could know what took place even if he was not there. The modern historian is careful to be as accurate as possible in all his reporting.

The above way of understanding history was not Luke's understanding. He was writing in the style of an Hellenistic historiographer which meant that he would include legendary material, biographical data, anecdotes, speeches, little stories--anything that would help to convince the reader of the correctness of the author's ideology. Stories were dressed up; speeches were devised. History *per se*, as we know it, was not all that important. What was important was that the reader would learn something from the material and that he would gain a new understanding of himself and his world. History therefore was not an "accurate" picture of the way events occurred; it was a tool meant to move people and cause a response in them. In a qualified sense therefore we can say that Luke was more of a preacher than he was

an historian.

We are in the dark as to the sources Luke used in Acts. How he chose his material, and why he assembled it in the way he did, is largely unknown (though we can understand in part, on the basis of internal evidence, how he selected and assembled his material). There are some characteristics which indicate the rationale behind a selection of material by an Hellenistic author. If a piece of material was very ancient, it would stand a better chance of being placed within a document. Thus if an ancient piece of material could be quoted, (such as a saying of a famous figure out of the past --either Jesus or an Old Testament prophet in Luke's case), then the writing would be greatly enhanced. Naturally, with this view of history, one would always use a document that agreed with the viewpoint of the author rather than one which disagreed with his position. It is apparent that one's perspective determined the shape and structure of any given document.

We can see this type of historiography most clearly in the speeches of Acts. It makes no difference if Paul or Peter or Stephen is speaking; their messages are always in accord with Lukan theology and the styles of their speeches are generally the same.<sup>1</sup> It is obvious therefore that Luke has taken the liberty of writing speeches for his characters as was the custom of all Hellenistic historiographers in Luke's time. (Other examples of the use of this technique can be

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<sup>1</sup>Schweizer has shown convincingly that the speeches in Acts have a striking similarity. E. Schweizer, "Concerning the Speeches in Acts," in L. Keck and J. Marty (eds.) *Studies in Luke-Acts* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), 208-16.

found in Tacitus [*Annals* XI, 24] where he fails to use the speech as it was originally written but instead adopts one revised in style, and in Josephus [Books I and II of *Antiquities*] where he does not use the speeches in the Bible but rather invents new ones which agree with his point of view.<sup>2</sup>) Luke has no qualms about doing this, and it causes the biblical student to be very cautious in ascribing much historical worth to Luke's Acts. For it is clear that history is important for Luke only in that it lends credibility to theological statements. He is not interested in historical facts or historical people for their own sakes; they become important and necessary only in light of his theological goals.

We decry such methods in the twentieth century (even though we are also guilty of misusing historical material), but we must not minimize the importance of Acts on account of Luke's understanding of historiography. Acts' importance lies not in the accuracy of its historical narratives, but in the commentary it is making on the first century. To even write a history of this nature was a great achievement. It is one thing to write a history of an occurrence or series of occurrences two hundred or more years after the event or events take place; it is yet another to write one almost immediately after the period. That is difficult enough, but Luke's task was even more arduous, because he had no precedent in other Christian writings to

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<sup>2</sup>Cf. Martin Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), 139f. for other references and examples.



follow. In his gospel he followed the Markan and Matthean patterns, but in the Acts he was doing something that had never been done before: the writing of a history of Christianity. Luke's writings should not be ignored therefore for a "faulty" historiography. Rather they should be appreciated for what they are: an attempt to instruct the church as to its past and its future. Luke recognizes that the world has not come to an end nor will it in the near future, and he looks back at the beginning years of the church and its connection with Israel. All of this he utilizes to explicate to his readers what they must do and believe to evangelize throughout the world.

As Conzelmann has pointed out,<sup>3</sup> Luke divides the history of Christianity into major epochs (the Torah and the prophets through John the Baptist, Jesus, and the Church) and major periods within the Christian era (Jesus, the Jerusalem church under the law, the world mission of Paul and the founding of the Gentile Christian church, and finally Luke's own time). This division can be seen quite clearly in an analysis of the overall structure of the book of Acts. He has described the epoch of Jesus in his first book and makes allusion to it in the introduction to Acts, 1:1f. After Jesus' ascension into heaven (where he stays permanently except for a brief appearance to Paul on the road to Damascus--another example of how separate the epochs are--), a new period is begun--the church in Jerusalem still under the law (1:12-8:3). The members of this church do all of the things they

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<sup>3</sup>Cf. Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960).

should do to convert the unbelievers and spread the gospel: preach, teach, perform miracles, pray, care for each other, and die for the cause.

After this description of the Jerusalem church under the law, Luke shows the mission expanding to outlying areas. No longer is the church to be exclusively Jewish, i.e. fully observing the law. Through God's revelation to Peter, Gentiles are now reached and given the Spirit in a way similar to the way the Jerusalem church received it. Following this, the mission expands to Judea and Samaria (as was predicted in 1:8), and the first Gentile church is begun under the auspices and care of the Jerusalem church. Finally in this second section the Apostolic Assembly decides that the Gentile mission should be allowed to remain free of the law, but they must consent to a minimum set of rules (see Acts 15:20) which would insure table fellowship and a basic unity between the Jews and Gentiles.

Starting with 15:36 and continuing on to the end of the book, Luke describes the Pauline mission as he goes farther and farther into the Gentile world. Luke portrays Paul's encounters with the Roman heads of state, the philosophers, the Jews who continue to resist the true word, and the ones who repented and became believers. Finally, Paul reaches the "end of the earth" when he arrives in Rome. There he continues to preach and defend the faith without hindrance.

Even though this period of the church can be bracketed off into definite sections as I have done above, nevertheless another of Luke's primary interests is to show the continuity between the sections

so that his contemporary readers will understand how the church came to be what it was for them in their day. Because of this, each section, each period, and each epoch are continuous with one another either through a leading figure or through a group of people. Thus, the pre-Christian period has its connection with the "Jesus" epoch: (1) through the figure of John the Baptist and his relationship to Jesus (baptizing and proclaiming him) and (2) through the relationship of Jesus to the period of the Torah and the prophets. Luke has Jesus continually alluding to the scriptures stating the prophecies concerning his coming and his work (cf. Luke 24:13f. for an example).

In this way Jesus points to the continuity between these two epochs. After Jesus' death, resurrection, and ascension, Luke shifts into a new epoch but not without showing the continuity with Jesus. Jesus (Acts 1:6-8) states that the imminent end of the world is not at hand, a power will come to them in the form of the Holy Spirit which will make them able to function and exist without him, and the disciples will be his "witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the end of the earth." The new epoch, that of the church, will begin on Pentecost following the coming of the Holy Spirit. This introduction into Acts provides the continuity between Jesus and the early church. He is the one who will send the Holy Spirit, and he is the one who determines where they are to go and in what order they are to go to these places. Jesus commands that they go first to Jerusalem, then to Judea and Samaria, and finally to the end of the earth.

Jesus' announcement of the coming of the Holy Spirit provides

the continuity between the introduction and the first section of Acts. This first section, as has been stated above, deals with the mission to the Jews in Jerusalem. Luke develops this section in such a way that the reader can see all of the accomplishments of the church: the conversion of thousands, the accomplishment of miracles, and the harmonious living together in one community. The mission seems to be running into grave difficulty at the end of this section when the Hellenistic Jews are persecuted and Stephen is stoned, but Luke utilizes this to provide the continuity between this section and the next one (8:4-15:35). For in 7:58 Luke introduces Saul as one of those who had an active part in the stoning of Stephen. Saul is the Jew above every Jew, the Pharisee of Pharisees. He is the leading persecutor of the early Christian church. Luke takes Saul who is barely introduced in the first section and makes him the leading missionary and church figure in the next two sections. While Saul is one source of continuity, another is the Hellenistic Jews who are "scattered throughout the region of Judea and Samaria" (8:1). In the first section they are driven out of Jerusalem, because they are Christian Jews who do not claim the law to be necessary for salvation. In the second section these Hellenistic Jews are the ones who begin the first Gentile Christian church. They are as active in the Gentile areas as the apostles are active in the Judean area.

The second section (8:4-15:36) then deals with the inauguration of the Gentile mission. Here too there is a strong sense of continuity between this section and the preceding and succeeding ones. Paul, the

persecutor in the preceding section, is now converted (9:1-30). Peter, the leading figure in the first section and the official leader of the Jerusalem church, receives a vision from God instructing him that all foods are clean. Peter applies this to the Gentiles, and the first Gentile, Cornelius, is given the Holy Spirit and baptised (10:1-11:18). The ones who were persecuted and scattered (8:1) now go to the Greeks, and many are converted. In Antioch the first Gentile church is formed. Following this Paul becomes more and more active in the Gentile church until the encounter with the Jerusalem church regarding the Gentiles' response to the law. The favorable decision in the Apostolic Assembly makes it possible for the Gentile mission to go on relatively unimpeded. James and the ruling body of the apostles and elders hand down the decision, and the former and latter provide the point of continuity between the second section and the third (15:36-28:31).

After Paul's victory in the Apostolic Assembly, he is easily the dominant figure in the third section--another means of continuity. The mission, through a series of journeys and trials and arguments on the part of Paul, goes to a large area of the Gentile world and finally to Rome, the "end of the earth." The movement has now run its course. Luke has succeeded in explaining how the Gentile church came into being and how it is continuous with the nation of Israel. And most importantly for Luke he has explained to his readers why things are the way they are in his time. In addition he has pointed out what has to be done to insure the continued expansion of the church--just as Paul "successfully" (cf. Acts 17:34) argues Christianity's case before

the Epicureans, Stoics, and Roman officials, the Christians of Luke's time must and can do the same. And, just as Paul was able to coexist with the Roman state, the church of Luke's time should also be able to do so.

This then is an overview of the theological and ecclesiastical purposes of Luke in Acts showing the events leading up to the Apostolic Assembly and the events caused by the decision made at the Assembly. There remains however one more detail to be discussed: the relationship between the conversion story in Acts 10, where it appears that the Jerusalem church approves of the Gentile mission, and the Assembly itself where much debate again arises with regards to this question. Why is there this apparent redundancy? Is it possible that in this very carefully constructed book there is almost an entire chapter which need not have been included? Why was it necessary for the church's ruling body to act once again on the matter of circumcision or no circumcision for the Gentiles?

If one was to take the historicity of the book of Acts quite literally, he would probably say that enough time had elapsed and enough of a turnover in the ruling body had taken place between the first approval (11:1-18) and the second approval (15:1-29) to warrant another debate and another final decision. But if one is to understand Acts as basically unhistorical, he must try to find a purpose behind Luke's inclusion of both of these passages.

Peter's involvement in the mission to the Gentiles is of great importance to Luke. Peter is the chief disciple and apostle and the

leader of the Jerusalem church. It is imperative therefore that he be the means through which the Gentiles are reached. This is necessary to preserve the continuity between Israel, Jesus, the Jerusalem church, and the Gentile mission. Luke will not have the Gentile mission be a separate organization void of any ties with Jewish Christianity. It is rather an integral part of the Christian church because of its beginnings: God's act through Peter.

We can understand therefore that in Luke's plan Peter's role in the conversion of the first Gentile was necessary. But one must wonder why there was trouble in Antioch if the Gentile mission had been approved. Why was it necessary for Paul and Barnabas to be sent to Jerusalem by the Antiochene church to gain a decision if a decision had already been made? Surely in Luke's mind the word about this decision had come to the Gentile mission, for Barnabas himself had been sent by the Jerusalem church to Antioch to oversee and to give Jerusalem's sanction of this mission. It could be said that the Assembly which approved what Peter had done (11:1-18) did not have the right to do so, and it was for this reason that another assembly had to convene but to say this is to miss the whole point of the Cornelius story! Peter and the Jerusalem church were not the initiators and approvers of the Gentile mission. God alone had decided to advance his mission beyond the Jewish world, and there was really no need for any approval. The church should only have to hear about Peter's experiences and God's revelation, and that should be enough to convince them of the rightness of this new mission.

Haenchen<sup>4</sup> says that the only explanation for the opposition to the Gentile mission in Jerusalem at the time of the Apostolic Assembly was forgetfulness. There is no logical reason why Luke has to report this Assembly, but because the Jerusalem church forgets the previous meeting and the decision which came from it, the debates take place again and another solution is reached. Haenchen hastily adds that Luke does not wish to say that it is forgetfulness that caused the Assembly; on the contrary Luke is quite silent and offers no reason why it had to be held.

Luke may or may not have attributed the apparent redundancy to forgetfulness; we really do not know. But assuming that Luke was aware of this redundancy, the deeper question is, why did Luke include the Apostolic Assembly in Acts if the decision concerning the Gentiles had already been made? If it was so important that Peter was the first one to bring the gospel to the Gentiles, why must there be another debate to decide the issue? Why is Luke unable to leave out the second story?

It seems that the inclusion of the report of the Apostolic Assembly was necessary for three reasons. First the Cornelius story does not deal explicitly enough with the problem of circumcision (although implicitly one can see Luke's conclusion [10:44, 11:3]: the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles even without circumcision; therefore it is not necessary for the Gentiles to be circumcised). Acts 15 may

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<sup>4</sup>Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 463f.



have been one way to say explicitly that the law, i.e. circumcision, had been a burden "which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear" (15:10) and that "the Gentiles should not be troubled with the law" (15:18). Luke wanted to state definitely at what time and in what context the formal decision was made against circumcision for the Gentiles.

Second, Luke needed this section for the sake of continuity. For here the apostles and elders act as a ruling body for the first time. While the apostles made the judgments in the previous chapters, from 15:2-16:4 the apostles and elders are accorded ruling status, and then in 21:18 the apostles disappear altogether leaving the elders alone as the ruling body. Acts 15 therefore is part of the explanation how the early Christian church went from apostolic rule to rule by elders. This would be especially important for the readers of Acts. Also, James was mentioned as an important figure earlier than Acts 15 (12:17), but here he is accorded the leadership of the church, which he will hold throughout the remainder of the book while Peter, who is the leader up to this time, now disappears from the story. James not only officially enters here, but he even announces the final judgment--the Apostolic Decree. Luke sees the Apostolic Assembly as a time for change in leadership and change in direction. No longer are the apostles to be the leaders; a new era has begun. Jerusalem is no longer the locus around which everything revolves. The Gentile mission is now of primary interest for Luke. It is clear however that he does this only after a careful transition has been made from Jewish Christianity

to Gentile Christianity. This transition comes through the Apostolic Assembly.

Finally, and most conclusively, Luke had to use the Apostolic Assembly in Acts, because he received word of an Assembly in his tradition. It is likely that he heard that Paul came up from Antioch because of trouble in his Gentile mission to gain a ruling with regards to the Gentile mission and their having or not having to submit to circumcision. Upon arriving in Jerusalem, he went before the Assembly and there encountered a number of individuals who still claimed that the law was necessary for salvation. They were voted down however and the Gentile mission was given the permission not to circumcise. (If the Apostolic Decree was a part of this tradition, it would help to explain the reason why he had to include the report of the Assembly in his book, i.e. his readers most likely would have heard about the Decree and may even have been living by it; therefore he could hardly leave something out which would be known by many.) In spite of the fact that the decision regarding the Gentiles had already been determined, nevertheless Acts 15 had to be included because of its importance in the tradition Luke received.

This then is a summary of the events leading up to the Apostolic Assembly and a description of Luke's concept of history. In Acts Luke is concerned about interpreting the events he knows have taken place rather than reconstructing the events exactly as they took place, and he can therefore manipulate his material to underscore his theological goals. In spite of this problematic historiography, the

importance of the Assembly in Acts still is clear. It is a major turning point, a change in direction in Luke's attempt to explain how the gospel reached the Gentile world. Let us now turn to Galatians and analyze the events which precede the Apostolic Assembly there and also take a look at Paul's more complex concept of history.

In the above analysis of Luke's Acts, it has been obvious that Luke has carefully constructed a history of salvation. Time is divided up into epochs: the pre-Christian epoch, the epoch of the life of Christ, and the epoch of the Christian church. Within each of these epochs there are periods which further show the detailed and determinative will of God. It has been very evident in Luke's Acts that God has skillfully acted so that the gospel was first brought to the Gentiles through Peter and then nurtured by the will of God through the Hellenistic Jews and Paul. Much like the historical narratives in the Pentateuch God determines when and where his people are to go. We have seen in Acts an excellent example of salvation history.

In Galatians however there is not a central emphasis on the history of salvation. There is a *type* of history of salvation, but one must be careful to discern the difference between Paul's and Luke's histories of salvation. (It would be tempting to draw upon all of Paul's writings to see if one could find additional hints as to his concept of history. However since Paul is not a static thinker who responds to every context in exactly the same way, the methodology I have adopted in this paper is to analyze Paul's concept of history only as it is expressed in Galatians.)

One can see traces of a salvation history in Paul's analysis of the movement of God in history until the time of Christ. God's activity in Abraham resulted in Abraham believing, and because of Abraham's faith, righteousness was given to him (Gal. 3:6f.). Four hundred and thirty years after the covenant was made with Abraham, God added the law "because of transgressions" (3:19). The law was not to erase the Abraham covenant (the law that was brought in could not annul the original covenant just as a human will cannot be annulled after it has been ratified [3:15]) or to contradict it, but rather the law was to be a custodian of man (3:24) until the offspring of Abraham (Christ) came (3:16). The law was not to last for all time; it was given only for a limited period of time (3:19). When Christ came, the law became unnecessary. Because faith in Christ has come ("returned!"), man is no longer in need of a custodian (3:25).

Paul maintains that the law is to last for only a limited period of time because of its enslaving power. According to Paul the law enslaves in three ways. First, the law enslaves man by causing him to think that he has already attained what he is expected to be. Man, under the law, does not allow himself to be free for God's future; he thinks he already is what God wants him to be. Thus he lives in the past where laws have been set down for man to obey. He believes that God wants his actions rather than himself. This allows him to remain the way he always has been because God only requires certain works and not his inner self.<sup>5</sup> Man under the law therefore believes

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<sup>5</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, *The Presence of Eternity* (New York: Harper

that God's will is absolute and unchanging, and he is left with a static view of the world and of God. This strips him of all freedom with regards to his future and prevents him from being free to respond to God's future. He becomes his own creator, and he can create his own future only in light of the laws made in the past.

Second, the law enslaves man in that it causes him to rely on works of the law instead of relying on the covenant made with Abraham. Because he claims that his salvation lies in what he does, and not in what God does, man is therefore cursed. He is cursed because he lives, not out of faith, but out of his own righteousness. His justification comes through works and not through faith.

Third, the law enslaves because it causes man to boast in himself and in what he has done, and this boasting naturally leads him back into sin. Paul warns against this boasting for two reasons: it causes a man to boast in one's own works rather than God's work in Christ and it will inevitably lead to a destruction of one's relationship with his brother. The self-conceit, the mutual provocation, and the envying of one another destroys the Christian community. A man who has spiritual arrogance or self-conceit can only be concerned about his own well-being. One who is boastful of his keeping the law will cause others to boast of their accomplishments. A man will naturally envy another who cites his many good works. These all contribute to a breakdown of the harmony within a community (5:26-6:6).

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& Brothers, 1957), 45.

The phrase, "But when the time had fully come . . ." marks the third step in Paul's miniature salvation history. Christ has come to redeem those under the law (4:5) and under the curse (3:13). The time of enslavement is now over. Christ brought the former period to an end by becoming a curse, i.e. by dying on a cross (3:13). Thus in the death of Christ man is redeemed from his sin, from the law, from his past, and from the curse of the law. He is now free. He has received, in faith, the promise of Abraham. He is living a life in the Spirit. A new "structure of existence" has now entered into the world because of what Christ has done. The shift of the aeons has already occurred. The history of salvation has ended.

What kind of a history of salvation is this in Galatians? It is very much unlike what Luke has in Acts. Instead, Paul's history includes only three major events: the covenant with Abraham, the giving of the law, and the Christ event. Following the coming of Christ his history abruptly comes to an end. God's actions of course do not stop with Christ's coming, but the decisive act in the history of the world has already taken place.

In apocalyptic thought it is not possible to talk about a goal of history; instead there is an act from outside of history which puts an end to history.<sup>6</sup> The apocalyptic hope did not center on a final fulfillment on the earth but a fulfillment outside of history.<sup>7</sup> Resur-

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<sup>6</sup>Rudolf Bultmann, "History and Eschatology in the New Testament," *New Testament Studies*, I (1954), 7.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 6.

rection and the last judgment were the prominent motifs of apocalyptic thought, and the Christ event which included the first resurrection brought about a new aeon, an aeon of the last days. Man is now delivered from the present evil age (Gal. 1:8) and lives no longer in the history of the world but in God's history, which is outside of this world. Therefore it is problematic to regard Paul's entire view of history one of salvation history.

Another problem in trying to find a history of salvation in Paul arises when one wonders if the entire period from Sinai to Christ is a history of salvation or a history of sin. It seems that the latter is more correct in light of what Paul says about his own situation before Christ: He was "confined" and "restrained" (3:23) under the law. Therefore the history of salvation ground to a halt as man relied upon the Sinai covenant rather than the Abrahamic covenant and as he attempted to live by works of the law and not by faith. It was a history of sin, not one of salvation.

Because of these reasons it is clear that Paul's history of salvation is a very sparse one, especially in comparison to Luke's. But there are some elements in Galatians which do point to a salvation history. When Paul looks at his own history, he says that God chose him from his mother's womb to preach Jesus among the Gentiles (1:16). He was then "confined under the law, kept under restraint until faith should be revealed" (3:23). But when the Son was revealed to him, he went to preach among the Gentiles who responded to him in faith (3:2). Paul is saying therefore that God had a definite purpose, a definite

history for him, and the events of his life were essential not only for his own salvation, but also for the salvation of the Gentiles. The Gentiles had been promised the gospel in the covenant made with Abraham when God said that through Abraham all the nations would be blessed (Gen. 12:3, Gal. 3:8). In Paul's life therefore there is a development caused by God bringing Paul and the Gentiles to salvation. This development reminds us of a history of salvation.

Because there are these developments as far as salvation is concerned, and because these developments are not as spelled out as definitely in Paul as they are in Luke's history of salvation, it might be better to use Dinkler's term, "plan of salvation"<sup>8</sup> rather than "history of salvation," reserving the latter for Luke's work. A "plan of salvation" then for Paul would mean that God had the Christ event in mind when he established the covenant with Abraham, but Paul is not interested in spelling out the details of this plan. In reality he gives the beginning point and the end point and does not bother with the many chronological details in between. This then differentiates Luke's and Paul's ways of writing history.

The "plan" would go something like this: Abraham was covenanted with by God to which he responded out of faith. Also at that time and included in the promise to Abraham, the Gentiles were promised the gospel of justification by faith (3:8). Four hundred and thirty

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<sup>8</sup>Erich Dinkler, "Earliest Christianity," in Robert C. Dentan (ed.) *The Idea of History in the Ancient Near East* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1966), 184.



years after this covenant was made, the law was given because of transgressions, but this law did not nullify the covenant. Instead the covenant remained in effect through the period of the law until Christ came. The law, which was to last for a limited time only, was ended. That which was promised in the Abraham covenant had now been accomplished.

There is therefore a modified plan of salvation in Galatians. It is clear that Paul is not interested in writing a history book. He is stating only the events which have relevance for his readers in the battle against the opponents in Galatia (more on this matter can be seen below). It is obvious that the plan that Paul does have in Galatians does not completely envelop Paul's concept of history. He goes much further than to say that man is in a plan of salvation which will continue along as God wills. For there is not only this looking into the past; there is also a looking into the future, an immediate future when God will come to give eternal life to those who live in the Spirit (6:9). It is here (and implicitly in 5:5) that Paul speaks most clearly in Galatians about his concept of the future and the Galatians' view of the future. From 6:9 it seems likely that Paul had been preaching that the world was in its last days and that the resurrection of the saints would soon be occurring along with the granting of eternal life to all Christians. But the end had not come. The Galatian Christians struggled against their opponents and preached the gospel in the hope of this coming end, but they were becoming "tired" (6:9) and unsure of the promises given to them by Paul. Paul is

worried that with this failure of the end to come, the Galatians will doubt the gospel he is preaching and will accept his opponents' false teachings. Paul therefore attempts to reassure them that the reaping of eternal life will come "in due season," and they need not be discouraged.

Because there is just this one clear-cut reference to the events of the future, it is thought that the opponents of Paul in Galatia have a similar conception of the present and future as Paul does.<sup>9</sup> Paul says that the immediate future will reap eternal life. Because the resurrection of the dead and apocalyptic thought were common Jewish views, it is probable that Paul's Jewish opponents would have accepted this. It is also Paul's contention that complete righteousness comes only at the end of time, not in the present. Since Paul does not really argue this point in Galatians, it can be assumed that his opponents there would not disagree with this either. (In 1 Cor. Paul fiercely attacks his Gnostic opponents for believing that total salvation and knowledge was their possession in the present age. It is safe to say that he surely would have polemicized against this way of thinking if his opponents in Galatia had adopted it.)

Paul does contrast the Galatians' future as Christians or as ones enslaved by the law. Paul maintained the Pharisaic concept that if one was circumcised, he had to keep the whole law or the circumcision

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<sup>9</sup>H. D. Betz, "2 Cor. 6:14-7:1: An Anti-Pauline Fragment?" (an unpublished paper presented at the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity at Claremont, California on February 7, 1972), 23.

was invalid (5:3).<sup>10</sup> And, if one kept the whole law, he would regard it as his means of justification which would deny the necessity of the Christ event. It is for this reason that Paul says that those who would be justified by the law are severed from Christ and have fallen away from grace. Anyone who feels the law is altogether or even partly necessary for salvation is seeking justification through means other than Christ. And Paul maintains that if one is circumcised, he must be doing it because he believes it is necessary for salvation. Otherwise why would he undergo the ritual?

Using this reasoning Paul warns against the option his opponents offer to the Galatians. His opponents' beliefs will lead them away from Christ and will bring them into peril with regards to the eschatological end. Paul's view of the future therefore is one of anticipation of an immediate end. The promises of God are still to be completely fulfilled in the future. Even though a Christian lives now in the life of the Spirit, there is still more to come. Total justification (2:17) and righteousness (5:5) and eternal life (6:9) are events of the eschatological future.

On the basis of the above discussion it is clear that Paul had a particular view of the past which resembles salvation history and also a definite view of the future which resembles apocalypticism. But it can hardly be said that Paul stresses either one of them in Galatians. His main emphasis in Galatians is not on the past or the

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<sup>10</sup>For a further discussion of this cf. H. D. Betz, *Nachfolge und Nachahmung Jesu Christi im Neuen Testament* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1967), 148f.

future, it is on the present.

We know from Old Testament writings that salvation history was the way of writing history after myth was abandoned and outgrown around the turn of the first millennium B.C.<sup>11</sup> This style lasted during the next two to three centuries until the writing of this type of history ran into problems. The prophets caused a dangerous turn of events when they postulated that if God revealed himself in the past, he must be doing so in the present also. But the problem with this was that while it was relatively easy to interpret God's actions in the past, it was very difficult, if not impossible, to do so in a period contemporary to the one writing the history.<sup>12</sup> (This has always been a problem for historians. When one tries to comment on his own historical period, he discovers how difficult it is to be as objective as an historian should be.) This created a distinction between false prophets and true prophets (cf. Amos 7:10f., for example) and a skepticism regarding history. Also it grew harder and harder to talk about a history of salvation when the Persian and Greek dominations lasted for such a long period of time. One can speak of God punishing his people only for so long until the people begin to wonder about this view of history.<sup>13</sup> And the scope of history was also a problem; it

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<sup>11</sup> Stanley B. Frost, "Apocalyptic and History," in Phillip J. Hyatt (ed.) *The Bible in Modern Scholarship* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1965), 104.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 102.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

was so large and complex. How could one understand the movement of history when it was so vast?<sup>14</sup>

Because of these problems history needed to be replaced by something else which could better convey the religious mode of thought. In the third and fourth centuries B.C. apocalypticism began to dominate the thoughts of the Jewish writers and thinkers. This lasted into the first century A.D. where it plays so important a part in the message of Jesus and in early Christianity.

It is clear that Paul was raised in apocalyptic circles,<sup>15</sup> but it is apparent that Paul radically altered the common view of the apocalyptic end. Instead of the apocalyptic event being in the future, it was now in the past for Paul. "When the time had fully come" (4:4) means to Paul that Christ was the turning point. His death and resurrection caused a shift of the aeons. Thus Paul envisioned himself in the last days, in the eschatological days. Paul's "present eschatology," did not claim as in gnosticism to have a guarantee of salvation in the present. Instead Paul retained the future element to guard against this. Paul's apocalyptic eschatology therefore safeguarded against those who emphasized only the future (pure apocalypticists--the present means nothing. One's acts are significant only in light of the future apocalyptic event. They are not intrinsically important.) or those who emphasized only the present (the gnostics: in the present one can

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<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Günther Bornkamm, *Paul* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971) 11.

realize the complete knowledge of God. Perfection and resurrection are possible in an earthly existence.) or those who emphasized only the past (the Pharisees: God's will was revealed totally and absolutely in the past, and it remains binding in the present and future no matter what the context.).

Paul especially speaks against his opponents' attempts to convince the Galatians that the past holds the key to salvation. Paul's opponents preach regression into the former aeon. Instead of the Galatians living in their present eschatological existence, the opponents seek to return them to the past. Because the past is the period of the law, the period of enslavement, Paul says "Do not submit again to a yoke of slavery"; that is, do not go back into a former structure of existence.

This is why Paul "opposed" Peter to his face (2:11) when Peter showed himself to be open to eating with Gentiles until the pressure was applied by certain men from James (2:12). Paul was illustrating his case with Peter's example, because it showed so graphically what he was saying. The Galatians it seems were almost convinced that an acceptance of the law would not hurt their relationship with Christ. They were being taught that the law would bring them into the Sinai covenant which would allow them to be direct partakers of that event. The law had not been important to the Galatians in the past, but they surely did not want to take any chances with regards to their salvation. They thought that they would still claim Christ even if they were under the law, and their faith would still be in Christ. The law would do

them no harm; instead there were good reasons why it would make them better people and more pleasing to God. To Paul however acceptance of the law was a dangerous move as he tries to show in his encounter with Peter. When Peter adopted a liberal and open stance in Antioch and ate with the Gentiles, he was saying that he accepted the judgment with regards to the Gentiles, i.e. they did not have to be circumcised. But when Peter reneged on his prior agreement by withdrawing from the Gentiles, he implied that the uncircumcised Gentiles were not in the same category as the circumcised Jews. Salvation was not effectual until circumcision had taken place. Peter therefore returned to the old way of life, the life under the law. He stated by his actions that Christ was not enough for salvation.

It was this regression that Paul objected to. The old structure of existence was in the past. No longer should anyone look to the past. (For Paul Christ was not only in the past; he was primarily the *Christus Praesens*.) Christ had brought man out of the past into a new era. The law had passed away. The old existence had been crucified with Christ. The new existence was an existence in the Spirit (5:25), in faith, and in freedom (5:1, 13). Paul says that in the old existence one lived for himself attempting to be justified by works of the law, but now that Christ has come, one does not have to live for himself any longer. If he allows Christ to dwell within him (2:20), a Christian cannot live for himself; he can live only for God. Man therefore dies to his old way of life, a life characterized by the domination of the self's ego. No longer does man's ego give life; it is now the life of

Christ that gives man his life. All this was made possible through the acts of Christ: giving himself, loving, and becoming a curse for the salvation of the rest of mankind.

Because a man in Christ no longer lives for himself and because his ego has been replaced by Christ as the means by which he lives, man's history has ended. Now it is totally God's history which determines his life and leads him into the future. No longer does the σάρξ contain man or restrain him. Now he is free from the power of sin, law, and all the worldly ruling powers.

Paul therefore visualizes the interrelatedness of the past, present, and future. The past includes those events which God has initiated so that the present existence might be an eschatological existence. The Christ event occurred in the past, but because Christ is living in the present, the Christ event occurs in every moment of one's existence. The present in turn is radically shaped by God's future which draws him forward in the hope of righteousness and eternal life.

Luke and Paul see the details of the Apostolic Assembly happening in greatly different ways. For example Luke has Paul playing a minor role in the Assembly while Peter and James are the main figures. In Galatians however Peter, James, John, and Paul occupy the main roles. Luke resolves the conflict with a compromise--the Apostolic Decree. Paul would not hear of a theological compromise though he was willing to raise some money for the poverty-stricken Jerusalem church.

These comparisons could go on and on, but in the context of



this paper, it is important that we compare the way both authors use the Assembly in their writings. We have seen that Luke places the Assembly in his book in accord with his history of salvation. The Assembly then serves a great purpose in Acts in that it ties together the Jewish and Gentile churches. In Galatians one can see that Paul also uses the Assembly to achieve something far greater than just the recounting of historical facts. Because of this one must be cautious in ascribing Paul's version of the Assembly as truly historical. Because Paul was an eyewitness, it is more logical to trust his word over against Luke's, but one must still be careful. Paul does not picture the whole of the Assembly with all of its events and moods. Rather he is only concerned with those events which are relevant to his position in Galatia. That he does this can be seen in three different ways.

First, Paul is not writing history just for history's sake. He is writing polemically in order to make a case against his Galatian opponents. While Luke was mainly trying to show how the gospel came through Israel to the Gentiles, Paul sought to convince the Galatians of the opponents' false teachings. He uses his activities before the Assembly to aid him in his argument. Following his conversion he travelled in Arabia but did not go up to Jerusalem, i.e. Paul did not have to gain approval of his gospel from the disciples. He did go up to Jerusalem eventually, but he saw only Peter and James, i.e. he was not called before an assembly to report on his gospel. He left Jerusalem and preached for many years in Syria and Cilicia for all of which

the Judean churches glorified God, i.e. Paul preached his gospel for a long period of time, and no one spoke against it. On the contrary there was much praise for what God was doing through him.

It is clear therefore that Paul writes very subjectively of the events leading up to the Assembly. He fails to tell any of the difficulties that must have arisen when he brought the gospel to the Gentiles. (For instance he does not speak of the Jewish reactions in the places where he did preach amongst the Gentiles.) Instead he is only interested in using these historical events to combat his opponents. Everything lends meaning to his argument.

Secondly, Paul is using historical occasions to show his consistency. If his opponents could point out instances where he moved from position to position or where he adopted a position contrary to one he formerly held, this would place his apostleship and his direct revelation from God in jeopardy. For if in fact he did adopt different positions at different times, then no one could be sure if the gospel he preached was the right one. Even more than that, it would create skepticism as to his ever receiving a revelation from God. Therefore he narrates his opening two chapters in such a way as to point out his consistency.

Third, Paul is trying to prove in his description of the events preceding the Assembly that his gospel was not one which he claimed to have received from God, but with which no one else agreed. If this were true, it would leave him defenseless against those who might claim that his revelation was only a subjective experience without basis and

that the gospel he now preached was unsupported by any other Christian. Paul uses the events leading up to the Assembly and the Assembly itself to refute this. He did, after all, go up to Jerusalem and meet with Peter and James. They surely must have talked about the message he was preaching then and what his plans were for the future. They must have discussed the Gentiles and the matter of circumcision, and they surely would have come to some kind of agreement. (Even if they had not come to an agreement, one has to assume an implicit acceptance of what Paul was doing in that he was allowed to preach his gospel for more than a decade before feeling a need to go to Jerusalem.) In addition to this informal agreement, Paul cites the response of the Judean churches: they glorified God because of what God was doing through Paul. Finally, in the Assembly itself, Paul emphasizes the approval he had been given by the apostles when he reports that nothing was added to his gospel.

Paul viewed history therefore as a tool which could be utilized to substantiate his arguments. He pictured history as a movement, God's movement. After a period of sin, God's act in Christ brought a new existence into the world, and, in a sense, history had ended with Christ's coming. Time continued to march on, but man's history had ended in light of the decisive shift of the aeons caused by Christ's death and resurrection. Paul, in wanting to maintain a tension between the past, present, and future, is careful not to let one dominate over another. He warns the Galatians against returning into the past, despairing about the present, or giving up hope in the future.

Though Luke and Paul have different styles and different concepts of history and different events leading up to the apostolic assembly, it is in their concepts of the present that there is an agreement. Both Luke and Paul believe that man is living in the days of the Spirit. Because the end has been pushed so far back in Luke, the present is all-important in light of what God has done in the past--the God who has faithfully saved his people in the past will continue to do so in the present and in the future. Paul, in agreement with Luke, (though Paul's concept of the end is far different) also emphasizes the present existence. Paul, like Luke, points to the past for proof of God's actions in the present and in the future. Though man's history ended in Christ, nevertheless life in the present is very important for an individual Christian and for the church and for the world (6:10). The present life in the Spirit is the common point for both Luke and Paul. It is God who has brought man to this place. It is finally this God who determines the present and future of man.

## CHAPTER II

### GALATIANS 2:1-10: PAUL'S VERSION OF THE APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY

#### Structure Analysis of Galatians 2:1-10

I. Paul's Narrative Account of His Second Journey to Jerusalem and the so-called "Apostolic Assembly"	1-10
A. The journey to Jerusalem	1-2
1. Temporal Setting	1a
2. Representatives of Gentile Mission	1b
3. Causes of journey	2a-b
a. Divine cause	2a
b. Practical cause	2b
4. Goal of journey	2c
B. The Assembly	3-10
1. Encounter with opponents	3-5
a. Result of encounter	3
b. The encounter itself	4-5
1. The opponents	4
a. Their actions	4a
b. Their goal	4b
2. Paul	5
a. His resultant action	5a
b. His goal	5b
2. Encounter with authorities	6-10
a. Result of encounter	6a,d
b. Parenthetical statement	6b-c
1. Evaluation of authority figures	6b
2. Theological statement	6c
c. Reasons for no further requirements	7-9a
1. First evaluation of Paul	7-8
a. Theological justification	8
2. Second evaluation of Paul	9a
d. The agreements	9b-10
1. Participants from the Jerusalem church	9b-c
a. Their status	9c
2. A legal act expressing partnership	9d
3. The first agreement	9e
4. The second agreement	10
a. The request	10a
b. The approval of the request	10b

Galatians 2:1-10, which describes what is commonly called the "Apostolic Assembly," falls within an historical narrative in the first two chapters of the book of Galatians. In this narrative (1:11-2:14) Paul declares to his readers his independence from all human authority and his total reliance on the revelations of God for his gospel. His gospel is not a human one (1:11), it came to Paul through a revelation of Jesus Christ (1:12), not through any revelation by men, including the original apostles and the early Jerusalem church (1:16b-17). In our passage and the one following it (2:11-14), this theme of independence is again stated in strong, unyielding terms. Paul's gospel is declared to be complete in itself without any additions or subtractions (2:1-10). Paul is so convinced of his revelation from God that he is willing to chastise even one of the original disciples, Peter, when the latter indicates by his actions that the law is still necessary for salvation (2:11-14). Paul uses this narrative in Galatians to prove that he never preached a gospel with the law, that the Jerusalem church approved of this, and that the Jewish Christian church in Jerusalem did not compel Gentiles to be circumcised.

The details of the journey to Jerusalem, Paul's reasons for going, and his goal are stated by Paul in the first two verses. He opens this section with an oft-used introductory word, ἔπειτα, seeking to tie together what has gone before with the Assembly. Paul always used this adverb (of time in this instance) to show a succession of some kind (a series of historical occurrences in Gal. 1:18, 21; 2:1; a list of resurrection appearances in 1 Cor. 15:5, 6, 7. Cf.

other examples of this in Paul, 1 Cor. 12:28, 15:23, 46; 1 Thes. 4:17 and in non-Pauline works: Luke 16:7; John 11:7; Heb. 7:2, 27; James 3:17; 4:14). Following the introductory ἔπειτα the Assembly is dated chronologically to be thirteen years after his first journey there.<sup>1</sup> This second trip of Paul to Jerusalem took place some fifteen years after his conversion (1:15-16a). Since it is unlikely that James would have allowed a gospel without the law after the persecution of Herod Agrippa (sometime before his death in 44 A.D.), this would date the time of the Assembly to be approximately 43 A.D.

It is evident already from Paul's narrative that his version of the Assembly is in disagreement with the report of the Assembly in Acts 15:1-29. In Gal. 2:1 it is plain that this is Paul's *second* visit to Jerusalem rather than his *third* visit as is reported in Luke's Acts. There are also many other differences:

#### Galatians 2

1. Paul is sent by divine revelation (Gal. 2:2).
2. The negotiations at the Assembly are with equals (2:6-9).

#### Acts 15

1. Paul is sent by the Antioch church (Acts 15:2).
2. The Jerusalem church, and especially the assembly composed of apostles and elders, is the 'head' of the universal church--all others are just satellites (15:2, 6, 28).

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<sup>1</sup>We know that their system of dating was such that they included the year from which the dating was begun and the year in which the person was now in; therefore we must subtract one year from the fourteen and one from the "three" in 1:18.

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| 3. Paul preaches a gospel to the Gentiles which was independent of the Jerusalem church (1:11-2:14).  | 3. Paul is sent to Jerusalem to seek a decision on whether his gospel to the Gentiles is sufficient and in accord with the will of the Holy Spirit and the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:6, 24, 28). |
| 4. There is a request for the Gentile mission to remember the poor (2:10).  | 4. There is nothing about a collection in Acts 15. Rather the reference to a collection is in Acts 11:29-30.   |
| 5. Paul is a main participant in the Assembly (2:2, 7-9).   | 5. Paul is a minor participant telling only of his experiences in the Gentile mission (15:12).   |
| 6. The Jerusalem leaders add nothing to Paul's gospel (2:6).  | 6. The Apostolic Decree, the necessary things, are laid upon the Gentiles as an additional requirement and part of their gospel (15:28-29).  |
| 7. "False brothers" insist on the necessity of the law and circumcision for the Gentile mission (2:4).  | 7. " <i>Believers</i> who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees" ask that the Gentile church circumcise their people and keep the law of Moses (15:5).   |
| 8. Peter and Paul run into grave difficulties sometime after the Assembly over the matter of the law and its necessity for salvation (2:11-14). | 8. The problems of the law and circumcision are now in the past; unity and good will dominate the interaction of the two churches (Acts 16f.).   |

From these comparisons it is not difficult to see a much different assembly in the Galatians 2 passage than in the Acts 15 one. Those who attempt to harmonize these two reports have done so with vivid imaginations but have ended up with insurmountable problems due to the lack of historicity in Luke's report. While it is evident that Paul is not writing a step-by-step, day-by-day description of the Assembly, (he is instead only including events correcting any false



conclusions the Galatians may have concerning the proceedings and outcome of the Assembly and events accentuating the message he wishes to get across in his letter<sup>2</sup>) nevertheless we can be assured of its historical accuracy due to the fact that Paul's writings stand too close to the actual events for Paul to try and report a different Assembly than what actually took place. Luke, while probably not purposely falsifying the facts of the Assembly, received only a thumbnail sketch of *an* Assembly (very likely one after the Assembly discussed in Gal. 2) and had to fill in the speeches and many of the other details.<sup>3</sup> In addition I think that any attempts to closely identify the Gal. 2:1-10 Assembly with Acts 11:27-30 is tenuous. There it seems that Luke has tied together a legend concerning Agabus' prophecy of a famine and a tradition concerning a collection taken at Antioch for the church in Jerusalem which would be drastically needed in the time of this projected famine.<sup>4</sup> Thus we must be careful about identifying definitely the Galatians 2 Assembly with either of these Pauline visits to Jerusalem in Acts due to Acts' unhistorical nature.

Ἀναβαλὺν, in its present context can only have a topographical significance and not a recognition of Jerusalem's superiority.<sup>5</sup> It

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<sup>2</sup>Cf. Donald Stoike, "'The Law of Christ': A Study of Paul's Use of the Expression in Galatians 6:2" (unpublished Th.D. Dissertation, School of Theology at Claremont, 1971) 221ff. for the problem.

<sup>3</sup>Cf. Ernst Haenchen, *The Acts of the Apostles* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1971), 440-64 and Chapter Three below.

<sup>4</sup>*Ibid.*, 373-9.

<sup>5</sup>Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (eds.) *Theological*

could make reference to Jerusalem being on a hill. From Paul's terminology the status of his travelling companions can be determined.

Μετὰ βαρναβᾶ indicates that Barnabas is an equal partner on this trip (see also Gal. 2:9 where Barnabas is a recipient of the "right hand of fellowship" along with Paul). Titus on the other hand was only a junior member (but a very important member, cf. 2:3f.) indicated by the term συμπαραλαμβάνω. This verb is customarily used in this way in the New Testament (Cf. Acts 12:25, 15:37).

Paul went up to Jerusalem for two reasons: 1) It was revealed to him that he should go, and 2) he wished to present his gospel to the Gentiles to the Jerusalem congregation "lest I run or have run in vain." The problems come when we try to understand both of these together in their historical context.

Revelation, for Paul, always comes from God or Christ (Rev. 2:5, 8:19; 1 Cor. 1:7, 14:6, 26; 2 Cor. 12:1, 7; Gal. 1:12). But why was it revealed for him to go to Jerusalem? (1) Was it just for a discussion to make sure everything was harmonious in both missions? (2) Was it because the Jerusalem church instructed him to come or because the Antioch church commanded him to go (Acts 15:2)? (3) Was it necessary for Paul to periodically get back with the disciples of the historical Jesus to make sure his gospel was still the same as theirs? (4) Was there trouble in the Jerusalem church because of a faction who was attempting to reinstate a gospel with the law for all

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*Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-71), I, 514ff.

Christians--even the Gentiles, and did Paul go up to Jerusalem to make sure nothing like this was done? (5) Or did this revelation from God come on behalf of the Gentile mission which was constantly troubled by Judaizers demanding the circumcision of Gentiles?

The first possibility can be eliminated because a revelation would hardly be necessary for such a mundane affair. The second solution can also be disregarded in light of what has been said about revelation--for Paul it always came from God or Christ. Therefore the word to go to Jerusalem could not have come from men, either in Antioch or in Jerusalem. (3) seems at first to be somewhat more plausible than the former two in that it seems logical that Paul would want to remain in line with and in close communication with the original apostles because of their association with the historical Jesus.<sup>6</sup> Thus it would be imperative for Paul and the other post-Easter converts to the faith to periodically converse with the disciples in Jerusalem. In spite of the immediate attractiveness of this solution, it contradicts what Paul is trying to emphasize in the first two chapters of Galatians. His gospel is not from men; it is from God alone (1:12, 1:16). Paul does not have to confer with the disciples; he has received his gospel from God and that gospel does not need approval from anyone.

Our fourth possible solution suggests that trouble in the church at Jerusalem caused Paul to come for a meeting. Schmithals

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<sup>6</sup>So C. K. Barrett, "Paul and the 'Pillar' Apostles," in J. N. Sevenster and W. C. van Unnik (eds.) *Studia Paulina*-- (Haarlem: Bohn, 1953), 18.

tries to argue that Paul states "I went by revelation" to refute his opponents who were assuming that he attended on orders from the Jerusalem church. He says "If the need for it (the conference in Jerusalem) had lain in the circumstances of Paul's own work, even his opponents were not likely to have had the idea that the Jerusalem church had summoned him to meet them."<sup>7</sup> Unfortunately for this argument we have no idea what Paul's opponents were saying about his trip to Jerusalem. In addition there is very little cause to believe that Paul would go to Jerusalem if the church there was having problems. If Paul would have been well-renowned, well-known, and respected by all, it would then be understandable that he might have gone up to solve the problems. But Paul surely did not have that kind of influence. In addition it would be very unlikely for the Jerusalem church, even under pressure from a faction of Jewish Christians who still considered the law necessary for salvation, to renege on a policy that had been in effect throughout Paul's entire ministry. Therefore this solution does not settle the issue.

It seems more plausible to accept our last possibility--Judaizers continued to upset Paul's mission to the Gentiles, and in order to solve the problem once and for all, Paul journeyed to Jerusalem to gain an agreement with the church there. Schlier adopts this position, but he believes that Paul was not totally convinced of the rightness of his gospel and needed to go to Jerusalem for approval.

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<sup>7</sup>Walter Schmithals, *Paul and James* (London: SCM Press, 1965), 39.

After a firmer agreement in Jerusalem was made, the church's unity would be preserved. Schlier derives this meaning from an incorrect translation of ἀνεθέμην in verse 2. Schlier translates this "I laid before them for decision." However this meaning is used only in writings later than the Galatians passage and is therefore a secondary meaning.<sup>8</sup> Behm<sup>9</sup> gives as a meaning "to set forth, impart, or communicate one's cause." It seems that this is the only logical meaning in this context. It is impossible to think that Paul would, after fifteen years of preaching his gospel, decide to go up to Jerusalem to gain approval of a gospel which he had been preaching for so many years. And, it is just as improbable that Paul, after declaring so boldly in Gal. 1 that his gospel was not from men but solely from God, would now consult men as to the rightness of his gospel. This in effect would place in doubt his apostleship and the authority of his revelation.

It is more correct to say that Paul went to Jerusalem, not to gain a judgment as to the rightness or wrongness of his gospel, but to seek an agreement which would eliminate the activities of his opponents. Paul was no doubt fighting on all fronts those who insisted that he preach their kind of gospel. It was therefore necessary for the gospel's sake and the church's sake that unity be gained with regards to this matter. Revelation then needs to be understood in a broader way than just a vision directly from God exclusive of any external

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<sup>8</sup>Heinrich Schlier, *Der Brief an die Galater* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1962), 66-7.

<sup>9</sup>J. Behm, in Kittel, *op. cit.*, I, 353.

situation. Revelation can also be understood as a message coming *through* an external situation. Therefore the concept of revelation is limited by saying that a revelation to go up to Jerusalem was unnecessary in light of the trouble in the Gentile mission.<sup>10</sup> Revelation, on the other hand, could have come through the situation of the Gentile mission, and this situation clearly indicated to Paul that an arrangement had to be made with the Jerusalem church.

It is evident then that there is a close connection between the revelation in vs. 2a and the goal of his mission. It is important to the understanding of Paul's polemic against his present opponents to comprehend this connection. The construction μή πως is exclusively Pauline (I Cor. 8:9, 9:27; 2 Cor. 2:7, 9:4, 11:3, 12:20; Gal. 4:11, 1 Thes. 3:5). Bauer<sup>11</sup> rightly points out that in the other Pauline instances μή πως indicates that whatever follows is probably going to take place. But he goes awry when he states that it was probable to Paul that his gospel was not right. This is obviously contrary to what Paul was trying to say: he had received his gospel from God, and it was independent from men. Paul knew his gospel to be the right one; it had come directly from God, and exciting events were taking place upon the preaching of that gospel (2:8-9a).

No, Paul was not worried about his gospel being in error; he

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<sup>10</sup>Cf. Schmithals, *op. cit.*, 39 who implies that "necessity" and "revelation" exclude each other.

<sup>11</sup>Walter Bauer, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1954), *ad. loc.*

was instead worried that the preaching of his gospel might, in the final analysis, be in vain. Paul could envision the results if an agreement was not reached between Jerusalem and himself. The church would be torn with strife. It would fight and work against itself.

In verses 3-10 Paul evaluates the Apostolic Assembly. It seems from the preceding verse that there could have been at least two main meetings, one with the Jerusalem church in general (ἀνεθέμην αὐτοῖς) and one with Peter, James, and John (κατ' ἰδίαν δὲ τοῖς δοκοῦσιν). But as is evident from his repeated use of δοκοῦντες (2:4, 6, 6, 9), this private meeting (mentioned in vs. 2) was the one that carried the most weight (see the discussion below on δοκοῦντες) for Paul was most concerned about maintaining the independence of the Gentile church from the Jerusalem church. In order to do this he would have to convince the leaders of his authority as an apostle, the equality of the Gentile mission with the Jerusalem church, his equality with the apostles, and the rightness of his gospel without the law. All this he wanted to do and yet continue to preserve the unity of the church. And he had to do this even with the assault on him by the "false brothers." The issue therefore of the Assembly was: Is the gospel void of the law preached by Paul (and Barnabas and the rest of the Gentile mission) a valid one? In 2:9 this gospel is indeed declared to be valid and continues with the full support of the δοκοῦντες.

The debates over vs. 3 have been fought in light of vs. 3's relationship to vss. 4-5. The grammatical difficulties as well as the

textual problems are discussed both in Weiss<sup>12</sup> and in Burton.<sup>13</sup> The central problem revolves around the inclusion or exclusion of the οἷς οὐδέ in vs. 5. Weiss<sup>14</sup> adopts the Western reading, Burton<sup>15</sup> the more accepted reading (and the Nestle text that we now use). Burton accepts this reading because of the difficulty of this reading over against the easier reading "current among the Latins." He also doubts that anyone would introduce the troublesome anacoluthic οἷς. (An anacoluthon occurs when, in the case of an interrupting clause or sentence, the author forgets his original construction and substitutes another for it upon resuming.<sup>16</sup>) Further Burton says that the reading οἷς without οὐδέ is too weakly attested for it to be accepted.

In addition to the textual problems in vss. 3-5 there are other problems as far as meaning is concerned. First of all what is the relationship of vs. 3 to what has gone before? The ἀλλά (vs. 3) says that in fact Paul has not run nor is he running in vain for the δοκῶντες do not compel Titus to be circumcised even though he is a

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<sup>12</sup>Johannes Weiss, *Earliest Christianity* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1937, 1959), I, 271-3.

<sup>13</sup>Ernest DeWitt Burton, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: Clark, 1920, 1964), 79ff.

<sup>14</sup>Weiss, *op. cit.*, 273.

<sup>15</sup>Burton, *op. cit.*, 83.

<sup>16</sup>F. Blass and A. Debrunner, *A Greek Grammar of the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 244.



Gentile.<sup>17</sup> This then is a summary statement reporting the results of the negotiations between Paul and the Jerusalem church. Circumcision, which was a symbol for the whole law (5:3), was not necessary for the Gentile mission. This requirement was not added to Paul's gospel. It can be questioned of course whether anyone actually even tried to compel him to be circumcised,<sup>18</sup> but the point is the same. Titus was not compelled to be circumcised. This is what Paul fights against so fiercely throughout Galatians, the compelling of Gentiles to be circumcised. In 2:14 Paul opposes Peter for *compelling* the Gentiles to be circumcised. In 6:12 the opponents "to make a good showing in the flesh they would compel you to be circumcised," here attempt the same thing that the Assembly said they should not do. Therefore an argument is developed against Paul's present opponents in Galatians--the Jerusalem church did not compel Gentiles to be circumcised. Burton<sup>19</sup> wrongly sees the situation here when he sees the pillar apostles as middlemen between the false brothers (2:4) and Paul and Barnabas. He thinks that the apostles tried to convince Paul and Barnabas that the Gentiles should be circumcised for the sake of these others. Therefore, while the apostles would not compel the Gentiles to be circumcised, nevertheless they would encourage it for the sake of these others. There is no evidence for this however.

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<sup>17</sup> ἑλλην is to be taken here in its broad sense meaning 'Gentile' as in Rom. 1:16, 2:9; 10; etc.).

<sup>18</sup> Schmithals, *op. cit.*, 42.

<sup>19</sup> Burton, *op. cit.*, 77.

Verses 4-5 have added their share of problems due to the difficulty in understanding their meaning.<sup>20</sup> First of all who are the *ψευδάδελφοι* in vs. 4? Since it has been proved earlier that the trouble with the Judaizers could not have been in Antioch, these *ψευδάδελφοι* had to be in Jerusalem, not in Antioch.<sup>21</sup> They could not be any of the leaders of the Jerusalem church, for the latter were in agreement with the Gentile mission and always had been. Also these *ψευδάδελφοι* would not have to be "secretly brought in" if they were in accord with the Jerusalem church. Therefore the *ψευδάδελφοι* were a faction of early Jewish Christianity who still considered observance of the law to be a prerequisite for salvation (Cf. Acts 15:2). It is not correct to go as far as Schmithals does<sup>22</sup> when he says that these false brothers were representatives of the Jewish government in Jerusalem who were sent to see how "orthodox" this new sect was. This is entirely speculative for there is absolutely no evidence to support such an argument. Where this faction came from and what their relationship was to the Jerusalem church are unknown to us.

Stoike<sup>23</sup> claims that the *οὐα δε*. . . in verse 4 indicates an adversative to verse 3 implying that even though the Jerusalem church did not compel Titus to be circumcised, nevertheless these *ψευδάδελφοι*

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<sup>20</sup>Burton gives a complete summary of the various attempts to interpret these verses, *Ibid.*, 79-82.

<sup>21</sup>Against Burton, *Ibid.*, 79.

<sup>22</sup>*Ibid.*, 107-8.

<sup>23</sup>Cf. Stoike, *op. cit.*, 206.

persuaded him to be circumcised, not by means of compulsion, but of his own free will. If only vss. 4-5 are looked at, a clear-cut answer cannot be found, for the  $\delta\upsilon\alpha\ \delta\acute{\epsilon}$  is ambivalent. The  $\delta\upsilon\alpha\ \delta\acute{\epsilon}$  could mean either that Titus was circumcised even though the Jerusalem church did not compel him to be, or it could mean that the matter of circumcision came up because of the actions of these false brothers. Thus the internal evidence is not clear and cannot provide us with an answer.

As I stated above, there are two other instances (6:12, 2:14) in Galatians where Paul uses the verb, " $\alpha\nu\alpha\gamma\kappa\acute{\alpha}\zeta\omega$ ." It is obvious that Paul is against any kind of compulsion in regards to circumcision and the law. But would he allow circumcision to take place if it was done of one's own free will? Stoike apparently thinks so, but he has failed to deal with the problem of the reason *why* anyone would want to be circumcised!

The Jews were circumcised so they could enter into the Sinai Covenant and thereby gain salvation. Paul rejects this for the Galatians however for one does not receive salvation through the Sinai covenant any longer, but only through the cross of Christ. Therefore, if a Gentile wanted to be circumcised it must be because he does not believe the Christ event to be sufficient for his salvation. Another act, namely circumcision, is also necessary. It is clear from this that Paul would be against Titus' circumcision whether it occurred by compulsion or out of Titus' free will. In fact Paul would have been very embarrassed about the whole situation and surely would not have made reference to this instance if Titus had been circumcised.

In vss. 4-5 there are a number of common Pauline words and emphases. In vs. 4 there is the "freedom which we have in Christ Jesus." "Freedom" is used almost exclusively by Paul (James speaks about the νόμος ἐλευθερίας which is not found in Paul. Other than this instance ἐλευθερία can be found only in 1 Peter 2:16, 19 in non-Pauline works.) and is a dominant theme of Galatians, especially chapters 5-6. That freedom comes only in Christ Jesus is also a very Pauline concept (5:1). ἡ ἀλήθεια τοῦ εὐαγγελίου is in 2:5 and also in 2:14. Paul uses πρὸς ὑμᾶς in 2:5, 4:18, 20, and in 2 Cor. 11:9, Phil. 1:26. πρὸς ὥραν is in 2:5 and also in 2 Cor. 7:8, 1 Thes. 2:17, and Philm. 15.

But it is puzzling that even with these oft-used words, there are so many words in these two verses which occur so sparsely in Paul's other writings: παρελσάκτου (hapax legomenon),<sup>24</sup> ψευδάδελφοι (used only once again--2 Cor. 11:26), παρεισέρχομαι (used only one other time--Rom. 5:20, but there with a completely different meaning), κατασκοπέω (hapax legomenon),<sup>25</sup> καταδουλόω (once again in 2 Cor. 11:20), εἶκω (hapax legomenon), ὑποταγή (used again only in 2 Cor. 9:13), and διαμέω (none others in the Pauline corpus).

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<sup>24</sup>Παρελσάκτος is a disparaging term for Paul's opponents. It is intended to demean the men who sneaked in with so much trickery. Cf. W. Michaelis, in Kittel, *op. cit.*, V, 825.

<sup>25</sup>Κατασκοπέω is based on military usage which implies an unwarranted spying based on distrust and suspicion. "'To spy out our freedom,' is difficult. The statement carries the nuance of inquiry with a claim of supervision, which corresponds to ἐπισκέπτομαι (look out for)." Cf. E. Fuchs, in Kittel, *op. cit.*, VII, 417.

In addition there is a kind of parallelism here: (if just these rarely used words are put together)

οἵτινες παρεισῆλθον κατασκοπήσαι	οἷς οὐδὲ εἵξαμεν τῇ ὑποταγῇ
ἵνα ἡμᾶς καταδουλώσουσιν	ἵνα ἡ ἀλήθεια διαμεύνη

The parallelism and the presence of so many non-Pauline words are indeed puzzling. We have no knowledge as to where this might have come from if in fact Paul did borrow it from some other writing. One has to recognize Paul's complete reworking if in fact the heart of this passage is non-Pauline. To speculate as to its origin or even to say definitely that Paul is borrowing phrases from some other document is highly problematic.

Whatever the origin of vss. 4-5 might be, the meaning of the section remains clear. The ψευδάδελφοι have caused trouble by seeking to have Titus circumcised. Paul however refuses to allow this to happen, and the Jerusalem church supports this stand. This event of course takes on great importance for the present Galatian controversy, and Paul speaks directly to their situation when he says: οἷς οὐδὲ πρὸς ὧραν εἵξαμεν τῇ ὑποταγῇ ἵνα ἡ ἀλήθεια τοῦ εὐαγγελίου διαμεύνη πρὸς ὑμᾶς. Paul's gospel was not compromised in this situation, and the Galatians must be careful so that the truth of the gospel does not slip away from them through a subjugation to the law. In this way Paul preserves the continuity of his gospel--his gospel has always been the same as it was when he wrote this letter to the Galatians--and the polemic against his opponents in Galatia with regards to the law. Paul did not let the law overcome him in this situation; neither

do the Gentiles have to submit to the law in the face of those who are preaching a gospel with the law.

I would agree with Schmithals when he gives vs. 6 the highest importance in the passage. Every aspect of the verse is crammed full with material that summarizes the intention and meaning of the entire passage. In vs. 6a δοκῶντες once again appears (cf. vss. 2, 6d, 9). Because it is used in a different way in Mark 10:42, there are really no other parallels in the New Testament. There are, however, many examples in Greek philosophy (see especially Plato's *Apology*, 21B, 21C, 21D, 21E, etc.). Probably our closest parallel to the thought stressed here and giving meaning to the δοκῶντες in our passage is Gal. 6:3, εἰ γὰρ δοκεῖ τις εἶναι τι μηδὲν ὦν φρεναπατᾷ ἑαυτοῦ. (The εἰ . . . ὦν here is a strikingly close parallel to Socrates' final admonitions to the Assembly with regard to his sons, Cf. Plato's *Apology*, 41E). Gal. 6:3 points to those who think they are something else than they really are. And in Gal. 2 there is a like situation. For here Paul claims that those who are reported to be something "special"<sup>26</sup> are not something special in Paul's eyes. Paul here is making a claim as to where authority ought to lie. Should authority lie with someone who is reputed to be something or should authority be with God and his revelations to men? This is the issue of this verse and the issue of the passage. While it is true that the Jerusalem apostles do have authority, their authority comes only from God.

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<sup>26</sup>Blass, *op. cit.*, 158.

Paul received his authority and gospel, not from the hands of men, but from God alone. While δοκῶντες εἶναί τι is not necessarily a demeaning term, nevertheless it does cast some doubt as to their final authority, and this is exactly what Paul wants to do. He wants to call attention to the source of authority.<sup>27</sup>

Again Paul is saying something to the Galatian congregation when he uses this term, δοκῶντες. The opponents were no doubt appealing to the authority of the Jerusalem church or of Peter or of James as their support in attempting to refute Paul's gospel. But Paul uses this instance to speak against his opponents. He is saying that the opponents cannot draw solely on certain men and their opinions, because they may easily have the wrong gospel. It matters little if they quote one of the leading figures in the church; he may be wrong! (After all, Paul goes on to say in 2:11f. Peter was wrong when he left the table of the Gentiles.) Authority and one's gospel can come only from God if it is a true gospel. Therefore the Galatians are to be wary if one preaches a gospel contrary to Paul's for he has received it from God himself. The Galatians' trust is not to be in what man says, only in what God says.

While many have interpreted vs. 6b as referring to the apostles' relationship with Jesus, I agree with the position<sup>28</sup> that it is linguistically more correct to have Ἰησοῦ refer, as the other

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<sup>27</sup>Cf. Burton, *op. cit.*, 82 and Barrett, *op. cit.*, 18.

<sup>28</sup>David M. Hay, "Paul's Indifference to Authority," *Journal of Biblical Literature*, LXXXVIII (1969), 37.

past tense verbs do, back to the Assembly. This seems to fit in better with Paul's intention in this passage, that is, even if they were the leaders of the Jerusalem church, they still added nothing to him. What Paul says here should be no surprise in that he has been stressing his independence from Jerusalem all along. Thus his independence from Jerusalem would demand an indifference to what the Jerusalem church was and said.<sup>29</sup>

Vs. 6c is a dogmatic statement attempting to prove the rightness of Paul's preceding statement. Hay thinks that this is a proverb alluding to 1 Sam. 16:7, ἄνθρωπος ὄφεται εἰς πρόσωπον, ὁ δὲ θεὸς ὄφεται εἰς καρδίαν. There is a similar allusion elsewhere in Paul, 2 Cor. 5:12, where a man's position and his heart are compared.<sup>30</sup> In Gal. 6:12 (εὐπροσωπῆσαι ἐν σαρκί) Paul's message is the same. He is urging his readers not to look at appearances, what seems to be (δοκεῖ εἶναι), but to look at the true reality. And the only true reality is the ἀλήθεια τοῦ εὐαγγελίου. Men, especially apostles, will be judged by their faithfulness to the gospel, not by their faithfulness to those who are reputed to be something. Thus in 2:11-21 the truth of the gospel can even refute one of these pillars. (See also 1 Cor. 4:1-3, 2 Cor. 5:10, and Gal. 1:6-9 for further examples.)

In vs. 6d an anacoluthon occurs for vs. 6d should probably read ἐμοὶ οὐδὲν προσανέτεθι.<sup>31</sup> This then is Paul's announcement of

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<sup>29</sup>*Ibid.*, 38.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 39-42.

<sup>31</sup>Blass, *op. cit.*, 245.



victory. His gospel is complete and continues to be independent and free from any man's judgment. The unity of the church is now guaranteed in that there is no disagreement on what the gospel should be. (It is obvious from 2:11-21 that Paul would not have accepted anything added to his gospel for this would contradict everything that he was trying to say in Gal. 1-2).

In vss. 7-9a there are two reasons why no further requirements were demanded of Paul. In vs. 7 the δοκοῦντες "saw" that Paul had been entrusted with the gospel to the uncircumcised; in vs. 8 there is a parenthetical statement, a theological justification indicating that God is the one behind the gospel and the subsequent mission; and in vs. 9a the δοκοῦντες "know" the grace which was given to Paul. Our first problem with this section is to determine the authorship of vss. 7-9. Schmithals says<sup>32</sup> "It is a well grounded conjecture that Paul in Gal. 2:7ff. is quoting from an official record of the outcome of the discussions drawn up in Jerusalem." He quotes Erich Dinkler's reconstruction of the original official document<sup>33</sup> . . . ὅτι Πάυλος πιστεύει τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τῆς ἀκροβυστίας καθὼς πέτρος τῆς περιτομῆς ὁ γὰρ ἐνεργήσας πέτρῳ εἰς ἀποστολὴν τῆς περιτομῆς ἐνήργησεν καὶ Παύλῳ εἰς τὰ ἔθνη . . .

Haenchen says,<sup>34</sup> on the other hand, that because the viewpoint

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<sup>32</sup>Schmithals, *op. cit.*, 52.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 33.

<sup>34</sup>Haenchen, *op. cit.*, 467.

expressed in Gal. 2:7f. is in agreement with the viewpoint of all of Gal. 2--the gospel which Paul preached was approved by the Jerusalem church--it cannot be the official wording of the Assembly's agreement and must instead be Paul's own work. But this is hardly a strong argument for it cannot be said automatically that whatever agrees with an author's viewpoint was written by the author himself. On the contrary he would no doubt include any official documents he could find if they agreed with his position. While it is difficult to make a strong case either way, I would lean towards Schmithals, (*et al.*) who claims 2:7 to be based on the official agreement, and I would do so for the following reason. Even though many of the words used in this section are common Pauline words, nevertheless *πέντος* is used here, and only here, in Paul's writings. Everywhere else *κηνός* is used (1 Cor. 1:12, 3:22, 9:5, 15:5; Gal. 1:18, 2:9, 11, 14.). While this reasoning is not very conclusive, it seems that it is enough to coax us towards saying that vss. 7-9a might be based on an actual statement coming out of the Apostolic Assembly.

Our second problem deals with the bases of the Jerusalem church's seeing and knowing that Paul had been entrusted with the gospel and had been given grace. How in fact did they come by their knowledge? It seems probable that this knowledge came through at least three means.<sup>35</sup> First of all the content of his gospel must have been impressive to them. If they all claimed that salvation came only

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<sup>35</sup> Compare Burton's four means, *op. cit.*, 91.

through Jesus Christ (and the Jerusalem church must have claimed this; otherwise Paul would have rejected them as apostles as he did to Peter in 2:11-14), then the recounting of his gospel would be a great influence on them. Second, his reciting of the story of how he received his gospel should have given them some insight as to his faithfulness to God and to the gospel. Third, and I think more important, the results of his preaching would be the most decisive influence. In other places (Rom. 15:18-19 and 2 Cor. 12:12) he tells of the things that have taken place because of his mission, and he tells of the praise that was given upon hearing of his preaching and deeds (Gal. 1:24).

Our third problem has to do with the meaning of this passage. Schmithals<sup>36</sup> is right when he says that the agreements reached at the Jerusalem Assembly did not create any new conditions. Paul had already been active in the Gentile mission since his conversion, and he had the support of Peter in this undertaking since his first trip to Jerusalem (1:18). Peter had been active in the Jewish mission before and was their head missionary (Gal. 2:7, cf. also Gal. 1:18f. where Peter is regarded as an apostle, that is, one who does a specific missionary activity<sup>37</sup>). This split in missionary activities was nothing new; it had to have been in effect from the very beginning because of the relationship with the Jews. If the Jewish Christians

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<sup>36</sup>Schmithals, *op. cit.*, 54.

<sup>37</sup>*Ibid.*, 51.

had preached a gospel without the law, a split would have had to have taken place immediately. This was not the case however (except in the case of Stephen and the "Hellenists," cf. Schmithals<sup>38</sup>). The Jewish Christians remained in the synagogues and continued to be on good terms with the non-Christian Jews. Therefore if Paul had preached a gospel free of the law to the Judean Jews, a battle would have ensued. Since we do not hear of any terrible friction, we know this was probably not the case. Thus the split of missionary activities would stay the same.

Nor did this agreement establish new conditions by setting off geographical areas, one exclusively for the Jewish mission and one for the Gentile mission only. For whenever τὰ ἔθνη is used, Gentiles are meant, and whenever ἡ περιτομή is used (except when the act of circumcision is being discussed), it always is used ethnographically by Paul (Rom. 3:30, 4:9, 12, 15:8; Gal. 2:12). Also ἡ ἀκροβυστία is to be understood ethnographically.<sup>39</sup> Haenchen agrees with Schmithals though his methodology is different. He is right when he says that it would be doubtful if Jerusalem would give up the whole Jewish diaspora to the Gentile mission.<sup>40</sup> Thus these words used in 2:7-9 are to be interpreted ethnographically and not geographically. Also no new gospel is preached after the Assembly. Of course there were never two

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<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, 16-37.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 45.

<sup>40</sup>Haenchen, *op. cit.*, 467.

different gospels. There was always the same gospel with the law added to the gospel in the Jewish mission for practical reasons<sup>41</sup> and cultural reasons.<sup>42</sup>

Thus Paul's independence was preserved, and nothing new was added to him. The agreement was made in the interests of the Jewish mission. Paul would naturally preach to anyone, Jews or Gentiles, who would come and hear him when he moved into a new area. But he was 1) promising not to cause trouble by preaching his gospel in the synagogues and 2) challenging the Jerusalem church to expand their mission to include these new areas. Thus the major agreement in vs. 9c contains the thrust of vss. 7-10 and its central meaning.

στυλῶν in vs. 9b is a troublesome term found in Pauline writings only in this passage. Paul, of course, does not say they are pillars; he only says they are reputed to be pillars. Barrett<sup>43</sup> thinks that Paul has received the tradition from Jesus concerning the figure of a new temple (Mark 15:38, 12:10; Matt. 12:42; Luke 11:31; John 2:19-21). Thus he says that the Christians in Jerusalem may have spoken of the apostles as pillars of this new temple. Wilckens<sup>44</sup> also sees in this passage the idea of a heavenly building, the church as God's temple. However, we cannot establish any kind of meaning from the passages Barrett refers to for they are either inauthentic sayings

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<sup>41</sup>Schmithals, *op. cit.*, 47.

<sup>42</sup>Stoike, *op. cit.*, 211.

<sup>43</sup>Barrett, *op. cit.*, 12.

<sup>44</sup>Wilckens, in Kittel, *op. cit.*, 734.

of Jesus or they are too vague with regards to the temple. Therefore I see no reason to accept this thesis. I think that all that can be said must come from the context of the passage itself since we have so few references to a man being called a pillar (Jer. 1:18 and Rev. 3:12). It seems that from the context a meaning of "leader" would be in order since real pillars stand in the most strategic positions and guarantee the continued existence of the structure. So also the pillars in 2:9 guarantee the continued existence of the church with their message.

Our final agreement Schmithals characterizes as the least important of the agreements.<sup>45</sup> I however feel that it has greater significance than he assigns it. If Paul's coming to Jerusalem had been ordered by the δοκῶντες, then vs. 10 could probably be regarded as another order. Instead vs. 10 is a plea for the Gentile mission to remember the poor as a symbol of unity. It was shown above that Paul went up to Jerusalem for the sake of unity, and now in our last verse Paul is very eager to keep this unity by helping his Christian brothers in Jerusalem. This final verse then pulls our entire section together. Paul's gospel to the Gentiles will be carried on, and Paul is not running in vain nor has he done so in the past. His authority was not challenged in Jerusalem nor was he compelled to accept circumcision as a part of his gospel. Instead he did not yield to the false brothers, and he was pledged the continued support of the Jerusalem church in

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<sup>45</sup>Schmithals, *op. cit.*, 43.

his mission to the Gentiles.

Thus Paul can defend himself against his Galatian opponents by saying that his position has always been a consistent one. Ever since he received the revelation from God, he has preached a gospel without the law. The Jerusalem church in the Apostolic Assembly did not insist on a gospel with the law, and there was no cause for any Gentiles to feel that the law was necessary for salvation. Paul refused to submit to his opponents. He was willing to raise money for the Jerusalem church, but he would not allow a different gospel to be preached than the one he had received from God.

### CHAPTER III

#### ACTS 15:1-29: LUKE'S VERSION OF THE APOSTOLIC ASSEMBLY

The location of Acts 15:1-29 in the book of Acts gives us a hint as to its importance for the author of Acts. While the placing might be coincidental, nevertheless the passage itself is indeed a turning point in the direction of Acts. For in this passage we find the apostolic and the entire Jerusalem church's blessing on the missionary effort to the Gentiles. While before Peter had himself gone to the Gentiles, now the mother church in Jerusalem had, in assembly, given its blessing to this undertaking. This passage is also a turning point in that Peter now drops from sight, and Paul and his activities occupy the author's attention. James becomes the head of the church in Jerusalem. Acts from this point on is concerned with the spreading of the gospel to the Gentiles.

Another interesting thing about chapter fifteen can be seen by an investigation of the two words ἀπόστολοι and πρεσβύτεροι. The ἀπόστολοι appear as the main characters in the first fifteen chapters of Acts (plus 16:4 which only describes what took place in chapter fifteen). But after 16:4 we no longer have the ἀπόστολοι mentioned. They are gone, out of the picture. Πρεσβύτεροι is used infrequently before chapter fifteen. The first five times it is used (2:17, 4:5, 8, 23; 6:12) πρεσβύτεροι refers to the *Jewish elders*, part of the Jewish ruling body. But in 11:30 and 14:23 we see the first examples



of the *Christian elders*, apparently the ruling body for the Christians. Then in fifteen we see the harmonization of the ἀπόστολοι and the πρεσβύτεροι into one central ruling body which must officially decide the most important of early Christian issues, that of the entrance of the Gentiles into the Christian fellowship. Thus in fifteen we have the ἀπόστολοι and πρεσβύτεροι but after 16:4 the ἀπόστολοι drop out of the picture.

This I feel is helpful in understanding the direction in which Luke is heading in Acts. This direction will be discussed in further detail throughout the rest of the paper, but it would be helpful for the reader to keep Luke's intent in mind. Chapters 1-15 is the era of the ἀπόστολοι. The πρεσβύτεροι do not have any great part in these chapters. In 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23, and 16:4 we see that the ἀπόστολοι and πρεσβύτεροι are always listed together. Then the ἀπόστολοι disappear in 16:4. The Christian elders are mentioned only two more times in 20:17 and 21:18. In the first instance they listen to Paul's speech; in the latter they serve as advisers to Paul. After 21:27 the πρεσβύτεροι are not mentioned and Paul is the main figure. Thus the stages are apparent: Chs. 1-14, the ἀπόστολοι are the prime figures; 15, ἀπόστολοι καὶ πρεσβύτεροι share the spotlight; 16-28, Paul is the center of attention (with the elders of the various churches presumably maintaining their roles but not playing an important part for Luke).

To begin with I would like to propose a brief structure analysis which will be expanded as I go through the various parts. In

vss. 1-2 an introductory statement sets the stage for the whole passage. Following this there are some additional preliminary activities (vss. 3-5) intended to move Paul and Barnabas before the church and the apostles and the elders in Jerusalem. Then Peter speaks (vss. 6-12) on the subject of the admittance of Gentiles and the grounds of their admittance into the church. Following this Barnabas and Paul are listened to as they relate the many signs and wonders done amongst the Gentiles (vss. 12b). James then speaks concerning the minimal non-troublesome requirements for the entrance of the Gentiles into the church (vss. 13-21). Finally there is the Apostolic Decree itself (vss. 23-29) preceded by a short introduction by Luke himself (vs. 22). Later in an analysis of the speeches and still later in an analysis of the Decree I will give a more complete structure analysis of verses 6-29. Now, however, let us take a look at the opening remarks of vss. 1-5.

It is apparent that vss. 1-2 follow from the preceding verses, 14:27ff. The place is Antioch to which Paul and Barnabas return after their missionary journeys. They are confronted there by "some men" who are teaching that one of the prerequisites for salvation is circumcision. After much debate, Paul and Barnabas amongst others are appointed to go to Jerusalem to inquire of the apostles and elders concerning this question.

As can be seen in other parts of Acts, the problems presented in this chapter are fomented by "some men from Judea." It is a familiar motif for Luke to blame either the Jews in general or a faction

of the Jews for the stirring up of trouble. In this instance these men were teaching the church at Antioch that circumcision was necessary for salvation. Circumcision was, of course, not an incidental aspect of the Jewish faith, nor was it incidental for the Jewish Christian faith.<sup>1</sup> For Jews and for strict Jewish Christians circumcision was still the mandatory sign of the covenant that assured the Jews of their chosenness. "It was the seal of election, a confession of faith, and an act of obedience to the Torah and to God's requirement of separation from the heathen."<sup>2</sup> Thus for one to agree to circumcision meant that one participated in the physical continuity of the salvation history. If the Christian faith had been thought of as a new religion for the Jew in the early church, then circumcision probably would have lost its significance, but faith in Christ did not constitute a new faith, only a fulfillment of the Judaism of the past. Bornkamm says that the unity of the church and the means of salvation were at stake in this circumcision controversy, not just a ritual with an exaggerated meaning.<sup>3</sup>

When we talk of circumcision we must investigate Luke's use of the law in Acts. Jacob Jervell<sup>4</sup> has done a thorough study of the law in Luke-Acts. In this article he says that before Luke and even before

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<sup>1</sup>Günther Bornkamm, *Paul* (New York: Harper & Row, 1971), 34.

<sup>2</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>3</sup>*Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>4</sup>Jacob Jervell, "The Law in Luke-Acts," *Harvard Theological Review*, LXIV (1971), 21-36.

the rest of the New Testament, the problem of salvation without circumcision had already been solved. The problem was solved, however, *de facto* and not *de jure*. The Gentiles entered the church long before the theological stance on their admittance was ever stated.<sup>5</sup> Jervell states that Luke labors to prove that the salvation of the Gentiles is in complete accord with the law. The law is not abrogated or abandoned. The image of the Jewish Christian church illustrates this in its following the law so closely.<sup>6</sup>

For Luke therefore, according to Jervell, the Jews are obligated to keep the law even though they are now followers of Christ while the Gentiles have "modified freedom from the law."<sup>7</sup> The distinction between Christian Jews and Jews is neither in the law nor in circumcision or the denial of these; rather the mark of distinction is that the Christian Jews believe "all things" in the Law and in the prophets. Jervell says that Luke knows of no Gentile mission which is free from the law. Luke may know some who are without circumcision, but none without the law. But in the giving of the Apostolic Decree to the Gentiles, they are not without the law either, though indeed it is modified.<sup>8</sup>

Günther Bornkamm states that for Luke the law is not the way to salvation as it is for Paul. Rather the law finds its end in Christ. Luke does not have a problem with the law for the controversy and

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<sup>5</sup>*Ibid.*, 23.

<sup>7</sup>*Ibid.*, 21.

<sup>6</sup>*Ibid.*, 32.

<sup>8</sup>*Ibid.*, 33.

debates of the very primitive church are long before him. Therefore he can speak of the law in a positive manner, and he can speak of Paul as one always obeying the law. Paul is the perfect Pharisee.<sup>9</sup>

Conzelmann takes a different stance in respect to Luke and the law. He states that the Church, in its incipient stages, remained loyal to the law.<sup>10</sup> After all Jesus went to the temple. But what happens when the Gentile Christian Church is founded? How is it that this segment of the church does not keep the law and yet can be a part of the redemptive history? He says that the answer lies in the description of the 'Apostolic Council.' The 'Apostolic Council' with its decree establishes a break with the past epoch in that it provides a summary of the law. This break of the "Church from the Temple" is possible and even justified by use of scripture (Acts 15:16f.). Thus obedience of the law belonged to a previous period in the redemptive history. Now the church has entered a new era, an era which had to come in that the law was a burden, a burden that even the Jews were unable to bear (Acts 15:10).<sup>11</sup>

It seems that Conzelmann is quite correct here. For this text is not an attempt to erase the law, but rather to give the Gentile Christians a compromise. To force upon them the whole law, the

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<sup>9</sup>Günther Bornkamm, "The Missionary Stance of Paul in 1 Corinthians 9 and in Acts," in L. Keck and J. Martyn (eds.) *Studies in Luke-Acts* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), 198.

<sup>10</sup>Hans Conzelmann, *The Theology of St. Luke* (New York: Harper & Row, 1960), 147.

<sup>11</sup>*Ibid.*, 212.

law that the Jews have never been able to master, would be to place too heavy a burden on the Gentiles, especially when salvation comes "through the grace of the Lord Jesus" (vs. 11) and not through the law. But there would be immense problems for the Christian church to say that the entire law is now invalid. This might mean the end or at least the hindrance of the Jewish mission. "The preaching of Jesus as the Christ of Scripture could not be believed by Jews if His followers left the Law of God. Hereby the community and its Head would be condemned from the very outset in their eyes."<sup>12</sup> Therefore the whole law is not demanded of the Gentiles but, rather "they will do well" (vs. 29) if they keep the summary of the law.

Returning to vs. 1 I should note that no other New Testament author besides Luke refers to the Mosaic law as "the customs (τὰ ἔθη) which Moses delivered to us." (Acts 6:14, 21:21, 28:17.) Also the name "Moses" refers to the law quite frequently in Luke-Acts, seldom in other writings (cf. Luke 5:14, 16:29, 31; 24:27; Acts 6:11, 15:1, 21; 21:21).

In verse two it is clear that this circumcision problem is no small matter and it occasions a trip for Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem. We note there the formulation, "Paul and Barnabas," which is used twice in this verse (also 13:43, 46, 50; 15:22; contrast Acts 14:14, 15:12, 25). It has been thought that because of this disparity between

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<sup>12</sup>W. Gutbrod in Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (eds.) *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964-71), IV, 1067.

the listing of the names (and for other reasons), Luke must have had different sources.<sup>13</sup> This problem will be dealt with below. Thus Paul and Barnabas and some others are appointed to go to Jerusalem. The Western text has the church in Jerusalem ordering the church at Antioch to represent itself before the Apostolic Assembly, but the Western text is generally regarded to be secondary and therefore of little help to this discussion. It stands then that their departure was by a resolve of the Antiochene church that Paul and Barnabas and some of the others were to make the trip to Jerusalem.

After the explanation of the controversy and appointment of a delegation to go up to Jerusalem, there is in vss. 3-5 the report of the journey (vs. 3), the welcoming of the Antioch delegation by the Jerusalem church and the activities that God did through them (vs. 4), and again a challenge by some believers concerning the circumcision problem (vs. 5). The delegation, having been sent on their way, returned through the lands which the Word had gradually spread to from Judea to Antioch. Again the conversion of many Gentiles took place, naturally with great joy. (The joy motif is common to Luke, see also 13:52 and 8:8.) The delegation was received warmly showing the unity and good feeling that Luke wishes to portray in Acts.

While in vs. 1 we had an indefinite group attacking the Antiochene church, in vs. 5 we are told explicitly who is seeking to enforce the practice of circumcision for all who come into the fold. They are

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<sup>13</sup>For this view see especially R. Brown, J. Fitzmyer, and R. Murphey (eds.) *The Jerome Biblical Commentary* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall, 1968), 194ff.

"believers who belong to the party of the Pharisees." Initially one could mistake this as a paradox, believers who still belonged to the party of the Pharisees. Later of course party and church were antithetical terms, for the term "party" became a term used when talking about groups outside the Christian church, or heretics.<sup>14</sup> But apparently even in Luke's time, or at least in the tradition that Luke received, this phrase did not present a problem. In vs. 5b we see a different formulation than in vs. 1 but the charge is the same. The "law of Moses" is used four other times by Luke (Luke 2:22, 24:44, Acts 13:38, 28:23) and is found only three times in other New Testament literature (John 7:23, 1 Corinthians 9:8, and Heb. 10:28).

Verses 1-5 present two problems that must be discussed: the relationship of Acts 15:1-29 to Galatians 2:1-10 and the source problem in Acts 15.<sup>15</sup> First of all it is not difficult to see the dissimilarity of these two passages. Even though it is clear that Paul was in attendance at the Assembly, it is doubtful that we are in possession of the exact events of the Assembly. Paul was not interested in reporting all of the occurrences at the Assembly. Instead he was concerned only with those events relevant to the problem in Galatia. Therefore it cannot be said that his version of the Assembly is totally objective, but it is more reliable than Luke's, however, because of his presence

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<sup>14</sup>Kittel, *op. cit.*, I, 180f.

<sup>15</sup>Cf. my systematic comparison of the two passages in Chapter Two (above). For further discussion see G. Bornkamm, *Paul*, 31-42 and J. C. O'Neill, *The Theology of Acts* (London: SPCK, 1961), 114f.



at the Assembly and because of the church's knowledge of the Assembly which prevented Paul from inaccurately describing the Assembly. On the other hand it is probable that Luke received only an oral or written report of *an* Assembly with a minimal knowledge of the exact events. He did know that the Assembly took place on account of the circumcision controversy. It was attended by the apostles (and others of the Jerusalem church) and Paul and Barnabas. Also, he may have had the Apostolic Decree (which could have been another basis for the composition of this passage<sup>16</sup>). Because of Luke's incomplete report of the Assembly, it is safe then to assume that Paul's version is more correct.

This leads us into a discussion of the source problem in Acts 15:1-29, a problem which cannot finally be solved. Harnack originally proposed an Antiochene Source<sup>17</sup> with the argument that there was a unity in respect to content. Jeremias<sup>18</sup> revived this theory saying that in the Acts 6:1-15:33 account, there were various interpolated sections (8:5-40, 9:31-11:18, 12:1-24, 15:1-33) in an otherwise connected account.

Bultmann has also taken up a similar way of explaining the source problem in Acts. Bultmann sees an Antiochene source as the

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<sup>16</sup>Martin Dibelius, *Studies in the Acts of the Apostles* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1956), 98.

<sup>17</sup>Cf. P. Feine, J. Behm, and W. Kümmel (eds.) *Introduction to the New Testament* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 1966), 124.

<sup>18</sup>Cf. *Ibid.*

basis of Acts originally written in the "we-style," which can be seen in 6:1-12a, 7:54-8:4, 11:19-26, and 12:25. Also there is a travel account composed in the "we-style" beginning at 11:28 (where he says the "we" is original) and 13:2 (where he says that "we" has been changed by the author into the third person). Bultmann also says that the author's interpolations illustrate the accession of written sources (in 15:1-35 "Paul and Barnabas" has been inserted).<sup>19</sup>

Benoit (whose position was basically adopted by The *Jerome Biblical Commentary*) proposes an Antiochene account which originally connected 11:27-30 and 15:3-33, with an interruption of an interpolation of a Palestinian tradition (12:1-23) and a Pauline tradition (13-14). Benoit says that 12:25 and 15:1, 2 were redactional. Thus when Paul began his journey in 11:27f., this was the same journey as presented in 15:3f.<sup>20</sup>

Dibelius argues that this passage is Lukan from the premise that the material presented in chapter fifteen could be stated only if there was a prior knowledge of the preceding sections and chapters of the book. Therefore the only one who was aware of the preceding events was the author himself. He cites examples in defense of his theory. Peter says (vs. 7) that God was the one who initiated the mission to the Gentiles. Could anyone in the Assembly know this? No, says Dibelius. Only the author and later the readers of the book

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<sup>19</sup>Cf. *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup>Cf. *Ibid.*

would know this. After vs. 11 no one spoke. Is this to be expected? Not if this is before an actual assembly of people. But of course Peter's speech is quietly accepted by the author of Acts. Dibelius believes that a real silencer to any opposition to carrying the mission to the Gentiles would have been Paul's relating all of these activities. But he did not have to, according to Dibelius, for the author had already presented them in his book. (For further examples see Dibelius.<sup>21</sup>)

Haenchen<sup>22</sup> also opts for Lukan authorship of Acts 15. Haenchen agrees that Luke follows tradition but not necessarily written documents from earlier times. Therefore it is Haenchen's belief that the problems in 15:1-35 can be solved without recourse to sources, i.e., written documents which need to be analyzed.

We are left with some problems (see the criticism of Bultmann's and Benoit's positions<sup>23</sup>). We do not have a clear answer concerning the Paul and Barnabas--Barnabas and Paul question. Was the Symeon of 15:14 originally referring to the Symeon of 13:1 before it was brought into this context? It seems from the arguments presented above that we are hard-pressed to find definite sources in Acts 15.

We can however conclude pretty definitely what is Luke's own work and what comes from written material handed down to Luke.

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<sup>21</sup>Dibelius, *op. cit.*, 95ff.

<sup>22</sup>Ernst Haenchen, "Quellenanalyse Und Kompositionsanalyse in Act 15," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft*, XXVI (1960), 153pp.

<sup>23</sup>Cf. Feine, *op. cit.*, 120ff.

Methodologically it seems that a study of this sort can be done only by a meticulous phrase and word study. By this method we find the following: (1) There are certain phrases and words found only in Acts which are used enough to lead us to believe that they are from Luke himself. (2) There are other phrases and words nearly unique to Luke that we can surmise that they also come from Luke. (3) And there are certain words which are *hapax legomena* (of the New Testament) or used only once in Acts which *may* indicate authorship other than Luke.

First we can denote some very common Lukan phrases and words. The phrase κατελθεῖν ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰουδαίας is often used by Luke (12:19, 15:1, 21:10). ἀπόστολοι καὶ πρεσβύτεροι is used in this combination exclusively in Acts. (This phrase is of a troublesome nature however for it appears in the Apostolic Decree itself [vs. 23] which is basically non-Lukan. We cannot be sure if Luke borrowed the term from the Decree and used it in this passage and in 16:4--it is used only in the passages which deal with the ruling allowing the Gentiles to enter the church--or if Luke inserted this phrase into the Decree to explain who the ἀδελφοί were. A conclusive answer is hardly possible.) ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί is used exclusively in Acts (some fourteen times) and in our passage in vss. 7 and 13. (Note that the speeches of Peter and James (a la Luke) begin with the ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί while the Apostolic Decree begins with another formulation.) σῆτημα is also found only in Acts (15:2, 18:15, 23, 29; 25:19, and 26:3). As I have mentioned above, τὰ ἔθνη is used exclusively by Luke to refer to the Mosaic law (Acts 6:14, 21:21, 28:17).

Second, there are phrases and words which are used *almost* exclusively in Luke-Acts and seldom in other New Testament writings. *στάσεως* is used some five times in Acts (15:2, 19:40, 23:7, 10; 24:5), twice in Luke (23:19, 25), and only twice in non-Lukan writings (Matt. 15:7 and Heb. 9:8). *σητήσεως* appears three times in Acts (15:2, 7; 25:20) and four times in other later New Testament works (John 3:25, 1 Tim. 6:4, 2 Tim. 2:23, Tit. 3:9). *Παραδέχομαι* is found in three places in Acts (15:4, 19:18, 20:20) and only in three places elsewhere (Mark 4:20, 1 Tim. 5:19, Heb. 12:6). Some have tried to maintain that *τέρατα καὶ σημεῖα* falls into this category, but this phrase is used so often throughout the New Testament that we can assume it was used by many authors and not by any one author.

Third, there are words that are found in Acts so seldom that one needs to look carefully at their contexts to see whether they are truly Lukan or not. It is interesting and revealing that there are none of these in vss. 1-18 of our Acts 15 passage. But in vss. 19-20 there are four instances (*παρενοχλέω* [19], *ἀλύσγημα*, *πορνεία*, and *πυλκτός* [20]), in vs. 24 two instances (*ἀνασκενάζω* and *διαστέλλω*), and in vss. 28-29 five instances (*βάρος*, *ἐπανάγκες* [28] and *διατηρέω*, *εἶ*, *ῥώννυμι* [29]).

The conclusions to this study are many. Since the words that are common to Luke and exclusive to Luke are found in vss. 1-19 (except for *παρενοχλέω* in vs. 19), vss. 21-23, and vss. 25-27 while the verses in which non-Lukan words are found are vss. 20, 24, 28, and 29, therefore the units vss. 1-2, vss. 3-5, vss. 6-12a, and vs. 12b

are probably Lukan units. The theological motifs and the Lukan phrases and words also indicate Lukan authorship of these passages. In vss. 1-2 there is the familiar κατελθόντες ἀπὸ τῆς Ἰουδαίας, τὰ ἔθνη τῶν μωϋσεως, στάσεως, ζητήσεως, ἀποστόλους καὶ πρεσβυτέρους, and ζητήματος. In vss. 3-5 there is ἐποίουσαν χαράν (cf. 8:8, 13:52), ἀποστόλων καὶ τῶν πρεσβυτέρων, and ὅσα ὁ θεὸς ἐποίησεν μετ' αὐτῶν (which is common Lukan theological motif, cf. 14:27). In vss. 6-12 there is ἀπόστολου καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι again along with ζητήσεως, ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί, the reference back to the Cornelius passage (chapter 10 which is Lukan), and again the heavy emphasis on the role of God in the decision to evangelize the Gentiles (see especially the speech of Gamaliel where this idea of God being responsible for the continuance and furtherance of the church is best expressed). Verse 12 has the familiar τέρατα καὶ σημεῖα, the troublesome βαρναβᾶ καὶ παύλου, but again the emphasis on the work of God done δι' αὐτῶν (cf. 4:16) is here.

Verses 13-21 present no great problems as far as Lukan authorship is concerned. There is the ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί again as well as a reference back to the previous speech which is of Lukan authorship (see above). There is a passage taken from the Septuagint, something which is done frequently by Luke. Because verse 20 is the only verse in this section which is troublesome, it can be concluded that it was taken from the Apostolic Decree and not the other way around.

Thus the main problem is with vss. 22-29. While vs. 22 is surely Lukan because of the oft-used phrases and words, a close look must be made at 23-29 to see if in fact the Decree itself has come from

Lukan hands. It is tempting to try and make a case for the Lukan authorship of the framework of the Decree, vs. 23 and vss. 25-27, because the words used are not unfamiliar to Luke, but one cannot make a judgment too hastily. Some striking dissimilarities must be noted between the Lukan introduction and the Decree itself. First of all the introduction indicates that the letter is meant for the church at Antioch while the letter itself states the Decree is intended to go Antioch *and Syria and Cilicia*. Second there is a difference in the order of the names--Paul and Barnabas (Introduction) and Barnabas and Paul (Decree). Third the introduction has Judas *called Barsabbas* and Silas carrying the letter while the letter itself apparently does not know of this second name for Judas.

It is therefore quite plausible to say that vss. 23-29 was an actual letter which was sent by some assembly to Gentile churches in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. Luke probably had a copy of this letter before him as he wrote. Before I can make further conclusions I need also to lay out the similarities between the introduction and the letter.

#### Luke's Introduction

1. ἔδοξε
2. τοῖς ἀποστόλοις καὶ τοῖς  
πρεσβυτέροις σὺν ὅλῃ ἐκκλησίᾳ
3. ἐκλεξαμένους ἄνδρας
4. πέμψαι εἰς Ἀντιόχειαν
5. σὺν τῷ παύλῳ καὶ βαρναβᾶ

#### Letter

1. ἔδοξε
2. ὁμοθυμαδόν
3. ἐκλεγομένους ἄνδρας
4. πέμψαι πρὸς ὑμᾶς
5. σὺν . . . βαρναβᾶ καὶ παύλῳ

These similarities of course are too numerous to be purely accidental. It seems reasonable to say that Luke received this letter

from his tradition, created vss. 1-22 (vs. 20 of course being borrowed from the Decree) to lead into the letter, and in this way attempted to say how and why the Gentiles were officially admitted into the Christian Church. Thus we can see how Luke structured a *Sitz im Leben* around the Decree to lend credulity to the Decree so that his readers would believe that the Decree actually came from the apostles and was condoned by the head of the apostles, Peter, and his successor as head of the church in Jerusalem, James.

Let us now turn to a discussion of the two speeches of Peter and James and then finally to a discussion of the Apostolic Decree. The structures of these two speeches are basically the same varying only to a slight degree. In Peter's speech he begins with a direct address (vs. 7b), the appeal for attention (vs. 7b), and then a movement into the main speech. There is a misunderstanding on the part of the hearers (vs. 7b), a quotation from scripture (vss. 7b-9), a reply to an initial misunderstanding (vs. 10), a call to repentance and salvation (vs. 11), and finally a focusing of the message on a specific audience (vs. 11b).<sup>24</sup>

A more specific structure analysis would look like this: in vss. 6-12 there is a convocation of the apostles and elders (vs. 6) to consider "this matter." After some debate Peter rises and reminds the people that he has already been told by God that the gospel is meant also for the Gentiles and that he himself has already gone to them

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<sup>24</sup>See E. Schweizer, "Concerning the Speeches in Acts," in Keck *op. cit.*, 208ff.



(vs. 7). He of course is referring to the conversion of Cornelius (Acts 10). Peter however did not decide that this was the thing to do; it was God who decided it (vs. 8-9). Finally there is Peter's question why the Jews wish to place such a difficult burden on the Gentiles (vs. 10) and a creedal statement (vs. 11).

The "apostles and elders" is common to this section as has been discussed earlier, and they are called together into an assembly. The word "council" has often been used to describe this convocation to which Bornkamm says "We have used the term 'apostolic assembly' in preference to the traditional 'apostolic council.' This is deliberate, because as regards the summoning of the meeting and the way in which it was conducted, and also the publication of its resolutions, the latter term automatically imports wrong ideas about church law and hierarchy which obtain [sic] only later."<sup>25</sup> Therefore at the time of the Assembly the term "council" implies a church system of government that was not yet in existence.

We are not told explicitly what the "matter" is that they are to consider, but we presume that it is the circumcision problem. This failure to mention circumcision again in this passage is a real problem and has led some to conclude that this speech was taken from a source and inserted here quite out of place. This reasoning is not correct, however since the speech ties in very easily with vs. 5. Verse 10 especially refers to the previous passage.

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<sup>25</sup>Bornkamm, *Paul*, 35.

Verse 7b, as I stated above, refers back to the story of Cornelius as does vss. 8-9. In the latter two verses there is a type of inverse parallelistic structure ("God who knows the heart . . ." [vs. 8a] with "but cleansed their hearts" [vs. 9b] and "giving them the Holy Spirit just as he did to us" [vs. 8b] with "he made no distinction between us and them" [vs. 9a]). There are also many key words in this section: ἐκλέγομαι is used in vs. 7 in a specific and absolute sense (cf. 15:22-25).<sup>26</sup> καρδιογνώστης (vs. 8) is familiar to Old and New Testament piety.<sup>27</sup> The omniscient God knows the innermost being of every man, the place where the decision is made either for or against him.<sup>28</sup> καθὼς καὶ ἡμῖν seems to refer to 10:47, καθὼς καὶ ἡμεῖς and 11:17 καθὼς καὶ ἡμῖν.<sup>29</sup> Διακρίνω is found elsewhere in Acts in 10:20, 11:2, 12. While it usually means to separate in a spatial sense, here it is used in a figurative sense--to make a distinction between persons.<sup>30</sup> Καθαρίζω (v. 9) is found elsewhere in Luke only in 10:15 and 11:9. Here it means that in the new time of salvation, God removes the distinction between clean and unclean. This purification does not come through ritual measures; it rather comes through faith

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<sup>26</sup>Kittel, *op. cit.*, IV, 144ff.

<sup>27</sup>H. L. Strack and P. Billerbeck (eds.) *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch* (Munich: Beck, 1922-61), II, 595 and III, 748.

<sup>28</sup>*TDNT*, III, 605.

<sup>29</sup>F. J. Jackson, K. Lake, and H. Cadbury (eds.) *Beginnings of Christianity* (New York: Macmillan, 1920-33), IV, 173.

<sup>30</sup>Kittel, *op. cit.*, III, 947.

(cf. Mark 7:19 where Mark or a glossator ascribes this advance to Jesus himself).<sup>31</sup> καρδιά (vs.9) of course is the center in man to which God turns, it is the root of one's spiritual life, and it determines moral conduct.<sup>32</sup> Πειράζετε (vs.10), to tempt God, is an Old Testament term (Ex. 17:2, Deut. 6:16) which is found elsewhere in the New Testament in 1 Cor. 10:9 and Acts 5:9. This term states that God has already declared his will on a particular subject and to refuse to accept that judgment is to tempt God.<sup>33</sup> Thus to refuse the natural conclusions of God's granting of the Holy Spirit to the Gentiles is to tempt God.

ξυγόν (vs. 10) originally meant the linking of Yahweh and Israel and *per se* did not connote a burden,<sup>34</sup> but in this passage ξυγόν means that the law would be a weight on the Gentiles and would bind them needlessly. Rengstorf says that μαθητής is used in Acts to mean a Christian except in 19:1 and 9:25. While the term μαθητής is used for Christians only in certain sections in Acts, it is used so sporadically that it is impossible to use this as a determining principle in differentiating between sources.<sup>35</sup> ἰσχύσαμεν βαστάσαι (vs. 10)

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<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, X, 424 and Jackson, *op. cit.*, IV, 175.

<sup>32</sup> Kittel, *op. cit.*, III, 612.

<sup>33</sup> Jackson, *op. cit.*, 173.

<sup>34</sup> Strack, *op. cit.*, 608-10.

<sup>35</sup> Kittel, *op. cit.*, IV, 390ff.

is not considered to be a legitimate statement by some.<sup>36</sup> It is maintained that the majority of the people still found their delight in the law of the Lord; Jesus did not seek to abolish or to amend the law, he just reinterpreted it; and Paul did not object to the details of the law, just to the belief that salvation could be gained by obeying the law. It seems to me that it would be very difficult to ascertain the popular majority feeling on this matter. To say that Paul was able to bear the law is to misread the New Testament (cf. Gal. 3:23). I do not find the argument that convincing at this point. Verse 11 is a Christological statement Pauline in nature. Also vs. 11 is the final statement on this matter of circumcision, for all are left speechless following Peter's speech (vs. 12a).

In vs. 12b there is a strange phenomenon unexplainable in its brevity unless Dibelius' view is adopted that Barnabas and Paul did not have to relate in detail all their activities, because these activities were listed earlier in the book (see above). In spite of this it still seems strange that Luke would not at least list a summary of the events in which Barnabas and Paul were involved. Again in this verse there is "Barnabas and Paul," and it is impossible to say why these names are inverted. "Signs and wonders" is another common Lukan phrase (2:43, 5:12).

The meanings of Peter's speech are indeed diverse. First of all Luke deems it important that an assembly blessing be given

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<sup>36</sup>Jackson, *op. cit.*, IV, 174.

concerning the entrance requirements for the Gentiles. Even though this decision has already been made in the Cornelius story, nevertheless a final stamp of approval is set down here. Secondly, an interpretation of the law is given by Luke. It has become a burden, and in addition to the burdensome quality of the law, Luke maintains that it has never been borne adequately. Thirdly salvation does not come through the law. It comes only through the grace of the Lord Jesus. Fourthly this was the final word against which there could be no argument. The assembly concurred; the Gentiles would be allowed entrance into the church without circumcision and without keeping the law of Moses.

The general structure of James' speech is very similar to Peter's. It begins with the direct address (vs. 13b) and then comes the appeal for attention (vs. 13b). Again there is the statement of the misunderstanding on the part of the people (This time it refers to Peter's speech [vs. 14]). The quotation from scripture comes next (vss. 16-18), followed by the reply to the initial misunderstanding (vs. 19), the Apostolic Decree (vs. 20), and finally there is a focusing of the message on a specific audience (vs. 21).

Again in vs. 13b there is the now familiar ἄνδρες ἀδελφοί. In vs. 14 "Symeon" is referred to. Though some have tried to prove this to be the Symeon in 13:1, nevertheless it is safe to say that this is the Jewish name of Peter and refers back to his previous speech. A "people for his name" is a debated phrase still today. Karl Schmidt lists three synonyms for ἔθνος, φυλή (people as a national unity of common descent), λαός (people as a political unity with a common

history and constitution), and γλῶσσα (people as a linguistic unity). He states that ἔθνος is the most general and therefore the weakest of these synonyms. λαός however is used here in a different way, in fact in a new, radical way. For λαός and ἔθνος had formerly been mutually exclusive terms. But now from the nations, ἔθνη, a people was rising up independent of national affiliations.<sup>37</sup> λαός is now broadened and means that faith in Christ determines membership in the λαός. Israel is not excluded from this new λαός, but a new basis is now established. For only those who adopt this basis, faith in Christ, are in the new λαός.<sup>38</sup>

Nils Dahl has done a detailed study of this phrase.<sup>39</sup> He has searched through the various Old Testament texts and those contemporary to them and has not found this phrase anywhere in the Old Testament material. He has found, however, that the phrase "a people for His ('My,' 'the Lord's') name" is a standard idiom in the Old Palestinian Targum. Thus he argues that the Acts 15:14 passage is modeled upon the general pattern rather than upon any individual passage in the Old Testament. He has found a close parallel in Ezek. 36:24, 28 (which Dahl says have had great influence upon the New Testament doctrine of baptism and the church). Dahl goes on to say that if Acts 15:14 is understood to be an allusion to Zech. 2:11, then the argument in

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<sup>37</sup>Kittel, *op. cit.*, II, 369-70.

<sup>38</sup>*Ibid.*, IV, 54.

<sup>39</sup>Nils Dahl, "A People for His Name," *New Testament Studies*, IV (1958), 319ff.

15:14-20 becomes clear.<sup>40</sup>

Therefore there is in this passage a radicalized usage of the term λαός. Only here and in 18:10 is λαός ascribed to another group besides Israel. The Gentiles are not yet at the point where they consider themselves to be the true church, excluding the Jews. Rather both Jews and Gentiles can now belong to the people of God.

In 16-18 we have a quotation of an Old Testament passage, Amos 9:11-12. These verses in the Hebrew text of Amos mean a far different thing originally than they do for Luke in this speech.<sup>41</sup> The misunderstanding comes from a mistranslation of the Hebrew text by the Septuagint. In the Hebrew text 9:12a reads "that they may possess the remnant of Edom" while Acts 15:17a reads "that the rest of men may seek the Lord." The main problem lies in the two words "Edom" and "men." The Septuagint has misread the Hebrew word, Edom, a geographical location, and has interpreted this passage to mean that God has prophesied already in the Old Testament that someday all the nations would seek the Lord.

In verse 19 James pronounces his judgment. Concerning this judgment J. Bowker<sup>42</sup> contends that here there is an instance of a "taqqanah, a n amendment or alleviation to the Torah," which went to a particular group of people in a particular situation and yet did not

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<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 324.

<sup>41</sup> See James Mays, *Amos* (Philadelphia: Westminster Press (1969), 164-5.

<sup>42</sup> J. Bowker, "Speeches in Acts: A Study in Proem and Yelammedenu Form," *New Testament Studies*, XIV (1968) 96-111.

invalidate the Torah. While the strength of the  $\kappa\rho\acute{\upsilon}\nu\omega$  in vs. 19 cannot be determined, nevertheless in this context  $\kappa\rho\acute{\upsilon}\nu\omega$  seems to be a command. His judgment refers not to the Decree itself coming up in vs. 20. Rather it admonishes the Jewish Christians from "troubling" the Gentiles who turn to God. A question that immediately comes to mind has to do with the new regulations imposed on the Gentiles. Are not any new regulations troubling for the Gentiles? Are not even the most minimal regulations a burden? Apparently not to Luke who would say that the only troublesome regulations is that of circumcision.

Even though the Apostolic Decree will be discussed below in a detailed study of the entire letter surrounding the Decree, it can be pointed out here that there is one difference between the two "Decrees" -- $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\iota\sigma\gamma\eta\mu\acute{\alpha}\tau\omega\upsilon\kappa\tau\omega\upsilon\epsilon\acute{\iota}\delta\acute{\omega}\lambda\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\kappa\iota\upsilon\kappa\tau\omega\upsilon$  in vs. 20 and  $\epsilon\acute{\iota}\delta\omega\lambda\omicron\theta\upsilon\tau\omega\upsilon$  in vs. 29--but we can say little about the difference. Marcel Simon provides the only helpful comment when he says that  $\acute{\alpha}\lambda\iota\sigma\gamma\eta\mu\acute{\alpha}\tau\omega\upsilon$  means ritual pollution, that is, one can become unclean and corrupted by eating with those who have committed wrongs, not only by doing the wrongs.<sup>43</sup>

Verse 21 in its present context is a real problem. Jervell says that the function of the verse is to provide a proof for the Decree; its function is to call upon Moses as a witness.<sup>44</sup> Dibelius declares that this verse is not intending to mean that the Gentile

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<sup>43</sup>Marcel Simon, "The Apostolic Decree in the Ancient Church," *Bulletin of the John Rylands Library*, LII (1970), 437-60.

<sup>44</sup>Jervell, *op. cit.*, 32.



Christians are to draw near to Judaism by obeying the fourfold decree; rather these four minor restrictions are intended to have a positive function, to release the Gentiles from the burden of the law and not a negative function, to introduce a part of the law into the Gentile practice. For Dibelius the emphasis in this passage is on the κηρύσσειν which he says is much stronger than the ἀναγγελλώσκειν. Moses is preached κατὰ πόλιν which especially refers to the way proclamation had to be done during the Dispersion. Thus vs. 21 would provide the meaning for the entire speech of James: because Moses is preached to the world, the ruins of David will be set up once again.<sup>45</sup> For Ropes<sup>46</sup> vs. 21 means proclaiming something to the world which is previously unknown to those who hear the proclamation. Since the synagogues were open to the pious heathen, the reading of Moses was a κηρύγμα to them.

While each of these authors have brought out different meanings, their understandings do not seem to state the true meaning of the passage. While I do not claim to have the only true meaning, I would like to explicate what I think this verse is trying to say. The γάρ seems to indicate that the upcoming verse is a reason or explanation or maybe even a proof for what has followed before (this seems to be the most common meaning for the term in the New Testament). Thus vs. 21 is going to try to summarize, complete, and explain the previous verses. The message of James' speech is that God has called the Gentiles to be

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<sup>45</sup>Dibelius, *op. cit.*, 97.

<sup>46</sup>Cf. J. H. Ropes, "Acts 15:21," *Journal of Biblical Literature* XV (1896), 75-81.

his people, and the Jewish Christian church should not impose any irksome regulations on them which would cause them to experience any unnecessary burdens while trying to live a life with Christ. Therefore the Decree was meant to place the absolute minimal regulations on the Gentiles just so they and the Jewish Christians could have fellowship. It surely was not difficult for Luke to imagine the problems the church would experience if one group had to maintain a strict code while another group had complete freedom. There would be terrible envy and strife and strain which could be fatal for the early church. The Decree therefore was an immense concession to the Gentiles, because (1) they did not have to undergo circumcision and (2) they only had to observe certain minimal regulations.

But what would the Jews say to these minimal regulations? They would say that the law would be lost; it would no longer hold its place. The very basis of the Jewish faith and ultimately the Jewish Christian faith would be abandoned. And so it appears that Luke is saying to the Jews that the law has been proclaimed for centuries and is now proclaimed every Sabbath in the synagogue. The traditions will not pass away. Even though the Gentiles are not required to keep the whole law, the law will survive.

In addition to the problem of meaning in vs. 21 there is the problem of reconciling James' speech with Peter's. At first there seems to be a grave discrepancy--in Peter's speech there are no requirements being put on the Gentile Christians, while in James' speech minimal regulations are expected. These two speeches would stand at

odds with each other except for a proper understanding of the law and its relationship to circumcision. The *law was circumcision* to the early Jewish Christians! Therefore the law would be expected of the Gentiles only if circumcision was expected of them. The minimal regulations in the Decree thus present no problem as they are not the essence of the law.

Let us now turn to the Decree itself. First there is a Lukan introduction (vs. 22), followed by the letter itself (vss. 23-29). Verse 23 is an introduction to the letter, vs. 24 is the reason for the letter being written, vss. 25-27 deals with those who would be bringing the letter, and vss. 28-29 includes the statement of compromise and the Decree itself. We have already examined in detail the relationship of the Lukan introduction with the letter so let us move immediately to the Decree itself.

Because Luke's description of the Apostolic Assembly is his own composition and because there is no mention in Paul's report of the Assembly about a letter, it is extremely doubtful that the Decree was a result of the Assembly. (Paul would have mentioned the letter because he would not want to risk giving his opponents anything which would contribute to the Galatians not trusting him.) Since there are no other explicit references in the New Testament (outside of Acts 21:25 which is of little help) to this Decree, we find ourselves completely ignorant as to its origin. Our other major problem in the Decree is the three dietary regulations standing side by side with τροφεία. Why are there only these regulations? Why these laws and

not others?

The Decree is a fourfold one asking for abstention from εἰδωλοθύτων καὶ αἵματος καὶ πνικτῶν καὶ πορνεία. There seems to be as many meanings to these words as there are exegetes of Acts.

M. Simon says that the Decree formulates again the minimum of ritual for all mankind but especially those who are proselytes. He thinks there is a close connection between the Decree and the Noachian commands, Gen. 9:3-6, but he maintains that Leviticus 17 and 18 provide the "ritual or ethico-ritual part of the Noachian commands."<sup>47</sup> Where then did the author(s) of the Decree gain access to these prohibitions? Simon states that the Decree must have been taken from the current rabbinical material (see also his discussion of the "god-fearers" and those rabbinical formulations). Why did the author include only these four commands? Πορνεία had to be included, says Simon, because the Gentiles did not have any firm convictions on sexual misbehavior. Their rules were inexact at this point. The other three parts of the Decree had to be included to guarantee full fellowship with the Jewish Christians. All of the others in the Noachian legislations already were agreed to by the Gentiles, and therefore it was not necessary to make them a part of the Decree.<sup>48</sup>

Simon turns to the Pseudo-Clementine writings and the Zadokite Documents for insights into the very ambiguous πορνεία. He rejects the theory advocating χουρεία for πορνεία claiming that there is too

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<sup>47</sup>Simon, *op. cit.*, 444.

<sup>48</sup>*Ibid.*

slight a similarity between the two. In the *Homilies* (VII, 8) he finds these words: "to abstain from idol meat, from what has died of itself, from things strangled, from what has been killed by wild beasts, and from blood." It is not difficult to see the similarities. Concerning the sexual life he cites this passage: "not to live in uncleanness, to wash oneself after leaving the bed of a woman, and women for their part must obey the rules concerning menstruation." This he says is a clear reference to Leviticus 15:18 and 18:19. He goes on to say that while πορνεία does not appear in the Pseudo-Clementine writings, nevertheless the passage quoted above seems to be a commentary on πορνεία. Thus he concludes that this commentary on πορνεία may have been inserted into the *Homilies* because of the ambiguity of that word. Simon ends his article by stating that πορνεία means all of the following: (1) concubinage or polygamy or marriage with heathen or second marriage, (2) consanguineous marriages, (3) the "infringements of the levitical regulations concerning sexual purity," (4) homosexuality, and (5) copulation with animals.<sup>49</sup>

εἰδωλοθύτων is a Jewish word denoting the meat derived from the pagan sacrifices. This food was considered to be unclean and extremely "harmful to one's health," if one would come in contact with it. Unfortunately, there is extremely little information about εἰδωλοθύτων in current literature.<sup>50</sup> On ἄμα J. Behm writes that the

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<sup>49</sup>*Ibid.*, 448-9.

<sup>50</sup>See Jackson, *op. cit.*, 205.

Old Testament belief in the sanctity of the blood provided the basis for the prohibition of eating blood in this Decree.<sup>51</sup> The inclusion of  $\pi\upsilon\lambda\chi\tau\omega\nu$  in this passage is a debated issue on textual grounds. Simply it means the "strangling of animals."<sup>52</sup>

The meaning of the Decree, aside from all of its problems, is the establishing and insuring fellowship between the Gentiles and the Jews. The Jews would, because of their upbringing, insist that the Gentiles be free from every form of physical defilement. This defilement would come from two main sources, unclean food and sexual uncleanness, and it was therefore imperative that the Gentiles conform to these regulations.<sup>53</sup>

The Decree was to guarantee the social intercourse of the Gentiles and the Jews and yet was not intended to put too heavy a strain on new Gentile Christians. Luke surely knew of the problem over table fellowship and of the social problems that existed in the early church. The meaning of the Decree for Luke therefore was that the Gentiles could worship with, interact with, and eat with the Jews if they would only follow these burdenless prohibitions. In addition there seems to be yet another meaning.

It is well known that Luke was greatly concerned in portraying a smooth transitionary period in which the Jewish Christians accepted

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<sup>51</sup> Kittel, *op. cit.*, I, 172ff.

<sup>52</sup> Kittel, *op. cit.*, VI, 457f.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Simon, *op. cit.*, 447.

the Gentile Christians without a great deal of trauma. But knowing the traditions which tell of terrible conflicts, he had to be true to these as well. Therefore on the one hand he had to be loyal to his basic format and on the other hand he needed to present the early church as historically as he could. It seems as if he felt that he could do justice to both of these if he showed a step by step transition rather than an immediate one. In Acts 15 therefore Luke is calling for an abstention of the law on the part of the Gentile Christians because of its burdensome qualities, and he is also calling for a lesser law, a summary of the law, so that his readers can see the continuity with the Jewish traditions.

But was the transition so easily made? It seems doubtful that the tradition was an easy one. In Chapter 2 above we saw the intense struggle that went on between Peter and Paul. This intense struggle was caused by a vast problem. But in Luke's Acts there is a great attempt by Luke, through the Apostolic Decree, to show how the two groups, the Jews and the Gentiles, were able to co-exist. Thus the exclusively Jewish Christian Church was in the past and Luke moves forward into a more inclusive Christian Church. For Luke this was the intent of the Apostolic Assembly and the Decree which proceeded from it.

## CONCLUSION

In Paul's version of the Apostolic Assembly the decision was made for Paul to go to the Gentiles while Peter and James and the rest of the Jerusalem church were to go to the Jews. This decision was made in order to solve the problems Paul was having in the Gentile areas upon his preaching of a gospel without the law. The Jerusalem church was to continue to preach a gospel with the law because they saw no theological problems involved with the preaching of the law to Jews who had always fulfilled the law, and because the Jerusalem church had to contend with the Jewish authorities in Judea. Their surrendering of the demand of the law would cause an unpassable chasm between the synagogue and the Jewish Christian church. Therefore the Assembly could not agree to an abandonment of the law for the Jews, but it could accept a gospel without the law for the Gentiles.

How effective was the solution made at the Apostolic Assembly? It is clear that it did not prove to be a final solution to the problem of the law for we see in Galatians that there are those who still attempt to preach a gospel with the law to the Gentiles. In fact the letter to the Galatians is necessitated by this Judaizing group who "compels" the Gentiles to be circumcised and to adopt the law. In light of the decision made at the Assembly, why is this being done? We can only speculate and suggest some possible reasons. (1) Many of the apostles may have died by the time the Galatian problem occurred and the power that once was Jerusalem's because of the presence of the



apostles may now be gone. (2) The decision made at the Assembly was between the Apostles and Paul and Barnabas and did not get wide publicity. (3) The decision was widely known, but the Jerusalem church did not have any power to enforce it. (4) The decision made at the Assembly was publicized and accepted by the majority of the Christians, but there were still some who disagreed with the decision and continued to preach a gospel with the law. The ones who did preach the law may have done so "innocently" because they considered the law to be a helpful ritual and an essential part of one's spiritual life, or they could have preached the law in opposition to the Christian faith by maintaining that the law was an essential part of their salvation. Unfortunately there is not enough known about the post-history of the Apostolic Assembly to really say decisively in favor of any of these possibilities. (It is of course a possibility that the real reason why the law was preached to the Gentiles is one of the above or a combination of some of them.)

In Acts the Assembly's solution to the problem of the law was a compromise in the form of the Apostolic Decree. The Gentiles were to concede to do these very minor dietary laws while the Jews were to refrain from enforcing the Gentiles to undergo circumcision and to fulfill the law. The Apostolic Decree then would at least insure table fellowship between the Jews and Gentiles and lessen the burden of the law which no one had been able to bear anyway. The concession was great for the Jews in that the law had always been central to their faith and now it was not going to be a requirement for people with

whom they would be eating and worshipping. The Gentiles, on the other hand, many of whom were "religious" people and inclined towards an ascetic way of life, may very well have been keeping these elementary laws already and observing them may not have been a heavy price for them to pay.

How effective was Luke's solution? While it is difficult to say because of Acts' historical unreliability, nevertheless there are certain indications that the solution offered in the Assembly was not an effective one--even within Luke's careful redaction. In 16:3 Paul circumcises Timothy "because of the Jews that were in those places." In light of the decision just made at the Assembly, this circumcision should not have been necessary for the solution of the Assembly was that the Gentiles did not have to be circumcised; their only obligation with regards to the law was to observe the dietary laws. But Luke's Paul seems to know that even if certain enactments are laid down by leaders in assembly, it does not necessarily mean that there will be agreement at every level of the Christian society and in every region. Therefore Paul, in order to be safe and to appease the Jews, had Timothy circumcised. The ineffectiveness of the solution made at the Apostolic Assembly is clear because of the problems encountered at the common people's level.

All through our study of the two Assemblies, we have had to contend with the fact that we do not have the actual "minutes" of the Assemblies. There are no factual reports extant describing all that happened. Because of this one must separate the incomplete reports

of the Assembly from the evaluations of the Assembly by Paul and Luke. In the first part of this conclusion it has been shown that the agreements offered in the two versions of the Assemblies are not very effective as far as their long-term effects are concerned. They are satisfactory in solving the immediate problems and achieving unity and harmony amongst the various factions (except for the "false brothers" in Paul's version), but how successful were they in the minds of Paul and Luke?

For Paul the Assembly was a complete success. He had gone to Jerusalem to make sure he was not running in vain, i.e. he was not preaching a gospel that would contradict the Jerusalem church's gospel thereby causing friction and a "credibility gap" on the part of his listeners. In Paul's view the Assembly solved his problem. He could now preach his gospel with the knowledge that it was formally accepted by the apostles at Jerusalem. While this did not convince him of the accuracy of his gospel in that he believed his gospel to be directly from God, it did give him a definite advantage against those apponents who might try to compel the Gentiles to accept a gospel with the law. The mention of the Assembly in his letter to the Galatians is a sign that he regarded the Assembly as a success. He cited the event of the Assembly in his "apology" to add an historical proof--one that would prove that his message had been a consistent one and that he had gained the approval of the apostles in Jerusalem--to his theological proofs.

Luke's evaluation of the Assembly was also a positive one. The Assembly, as has been said earlier (see Chapter One), was included by

Luke chiefly because he had received it in his tradition, and the knowledge that *an* Assembly had taken place was known in the church of his time. This conclusion was drawn because of the apparent redundancy of the Assembly in light of the Cornelius story (Acts 10:1-11:18). But Luke went beyond the Assembly's immediate purpose, that of allowing the Gentiles to escape from observing the law, and used the Assembly as a transposition from one phase to another in his master plan. In other words, Luke, in the report of the Assembly, is making dramatic changes in the movement of his book. For example, Paul and Barnabas come to Jerusalem, which at that time was the center of Christianity, but following the Assembly, Jerusalem is almost completely out of the picture. There is also a change of leadership which takes place in the Assembly--Peter is now dropped from Acts and James is the new leader of the church in Jerusalem. James establishes himself as leader by making the final pronouncement of the "fate" of the Gentiles. It is his formulation of the Apostolic Decree which is to be spread to the various Gentile areas. Also in the Assembly the apostles *and* elders debate and finally decide about the Gentile situation while before in Acts the apostles were the main arbiters. Following the Assembly the elders become the sole governing power. In addition to these Paul now takes over as the primary missionary and occupies most of Luke's attention in the remaining portion of Acts. The Assembly therefore in Luke's evaluation is a success, not only in solving the problem of the Gentiles and the law (for the second time), but also in achieving the transition from one section to another.

For both Paul and Luke the immediate problems were solved at the Assemblies. Paul's gospel was in accord with the gospel of the Jerusalem church, and it would not be contradicted and undermined by the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem. Luke used the Assembly to strengthen the continuity between Jewish Christianity and Gentile Christianity and to solve the practical problems of table fellowship which would be a problem once unity was established.

Today the Christian churches are also confronted with the problem of disunity. The church is divided into large and small denominations, all ostensibly working for similar goals, but all working separately. It is obvious that there is money and time and manpower wasted (not to mention the credibility that is lost when non-Christians see the pluralism of the Christian church) because of a great deal of duplication caused by this disunity. (Unfortunately, it is also the case that many churches work towards unification primarily for materialistic reasons.)

Unfortunately the task of unifying church bodies is too often done to solve only the immediate problems. Just as the Assemblies solved only the short-term problems, so also does the church today often create solutions only for the present. The *modus operandi* is commonly to form *ad hoc* committees to deal with problems that already exist and not to attempt to define and create alternatives to handle future difficulties. But as time goes on, the additional complexities of a given situation and the immense difficulties still in existence become apparent. In order for unity to be achieved then, it is clear

that church bodies must come to grips with the long-term effects as well as the short-term ones. In order to do this it seems to me that three levels of unity must be attained.

First of all theological unity, i.e. agreement, must be attained. While most religions deal with God and his activities with man, nevertheless the interpretations churches have of God and man are oftentimes the reasons why churches break apart and prevent unification. Therefore in order to achieve unity, churches have to be able to accept one another's interpretation of God's activity and man's response as a valid one. Even if the content and context of one's message are different than another's, nevertheless there can be agreement if there is this common understanding of God and man. Theological unity is best achieved, with longer-lasting results, when the source of their theological agreement is the same. And in the Christian faith it is claimed that Jesus is the source of one's faith. His teachings and ideas about God and man may be said in different ways to different contexts, but the basic understandings can still be the same.

Second there must be a "practical" unity. That is, certain "rituals" will be adopted or abandoned, or a compromise reached in regard to them. Church polity will have to be agreed upon, and the dependence or lack of dependence of churches on higher authority must be decided before churches can work together. In the two Apostolic Assemblies, the "practical" aspects of unity are extremely important. In the Lukan Assembly a compromise was made with regards to the ritual of the law; both sides could accept this compromise, and unity was

attained. Paul would not have accepted a compromise, because, as far as he was concerned, doing any part of the law meant that one was trying to please God by his own actions instead of letting God's actions in Christ be the sole means of salvation. Therefore the ritual of circumcision was a sign of a very crucial theological doctrine. In our situation we must guard against unity where there is no agreement on rituals which express fundamental truths (Baptism, Communion, etc.).

Third, and I think this is where the long-term effects of the Apostolic Assembly proved to be unsatisfactory, there must be a unity amongst the common people. The reports of the Apostolic Assemblies and the events following them show that this level of unity was not attained. While most of the representatives at the Assemblies were unified (the "false brothers" mentioned in Gal. 2 were not in agreement with the position adopted at the Assembly), it is apparent that the Assemblies' decisions were not as well received elsewhere as they were in the Assemblies. The church's lack of acceptance of the Assemblies' decisions resulted in the writing of the letter to the Galatians which was a refutation of a position contrary to the decision made at the Galatians Assembly, and in Acts it resulted in Paul having to circumcise Timothy because of the conflicts which would have arisen between the Jews and Timothy (and Paul) due to an uncircumcised Gentile preaching, teaching, and eating with Jews (although this event in Acts 16 seems to be unhistorical). Unity is incomplete therefore if it is unity only amongst the very few (as it was in Paul's version of the Assembly) or if God acts without any consultation of man (as it was in Acts).

It is clear from the past two thousand years of history that unity amongst the masses has not been realized. Because of the individual differences, needs, and conceptualizations of man, it is doubtful that unity of this nature will ever become a reality. Therefore the question is not, "What can the Christian Church do to gain complete unity?" Instead the question should be "What is a meaningful form of pluralism which, at the very least, could provide structures for cooperation and co-existence?" For it is apparent that immense theological disagreements and practical problems present so many roadblocks to complete unity, it would be more advantageous if time and energies were spent discovering a pluralism which would best serve the interests and goals of Christianity and the world.

A high degree of unity was not attained at either Assembly. Rather the pluralism of the Christian Church, which existed even at that time, was recognized, and solutions were offered in light of this pluralism. Therefore in Galatians 2:1-10 Paul and the Gentile mission were to continue to go to the Gentiles while the Jerusalem church was to continue to go to the Jews. In Acts 15:1-29 the Gentiles were to adopt four minor regulations, but they were not asked to accept the whole law nor were the Jews asked to give up the law and live only by the Apostolic Decree. The Gentiles and Jews were not called upon to live together, worship together, or completely fuse together their ecclesiastical organizations. Instead they were to be open to each other and to cooperate in their efforts. Total integration of Jews and Gentiles was not of immediate concern. Instead the Assemblies stressed



that both groups should regard each other as true members of the Christian church.

Finally then there are three conclusions that can be drawn from our study. First, unity can never be a reality unless the Christian church is in agreement theologically and practically. In addition there must be a unity amongst all the people. Second, since it is doubtful that unity of this nature will ever become a reality, the Christian church must find ways of dealing with its pluralistic situation. The church must ask how it can be most effective even when it is not completely unified. And, third, it is imperative that the church be flexible after agreements are made. Both Paul and Luke in evaluating the Apostolic Assemblies show that it is necessary to take past solutions and evaluate and reapply them in light of new situations. It is therefore not of prime importance for the church to look for "eternal" solutions to our problem of disunity. Rather the church must always seek to discover new ways of handling contemporary problems. The Apostolic Assemblies in Galatians 2 and Acts 15 show us that the church must be a dynamic *modi cooperandi et convivendi*.

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